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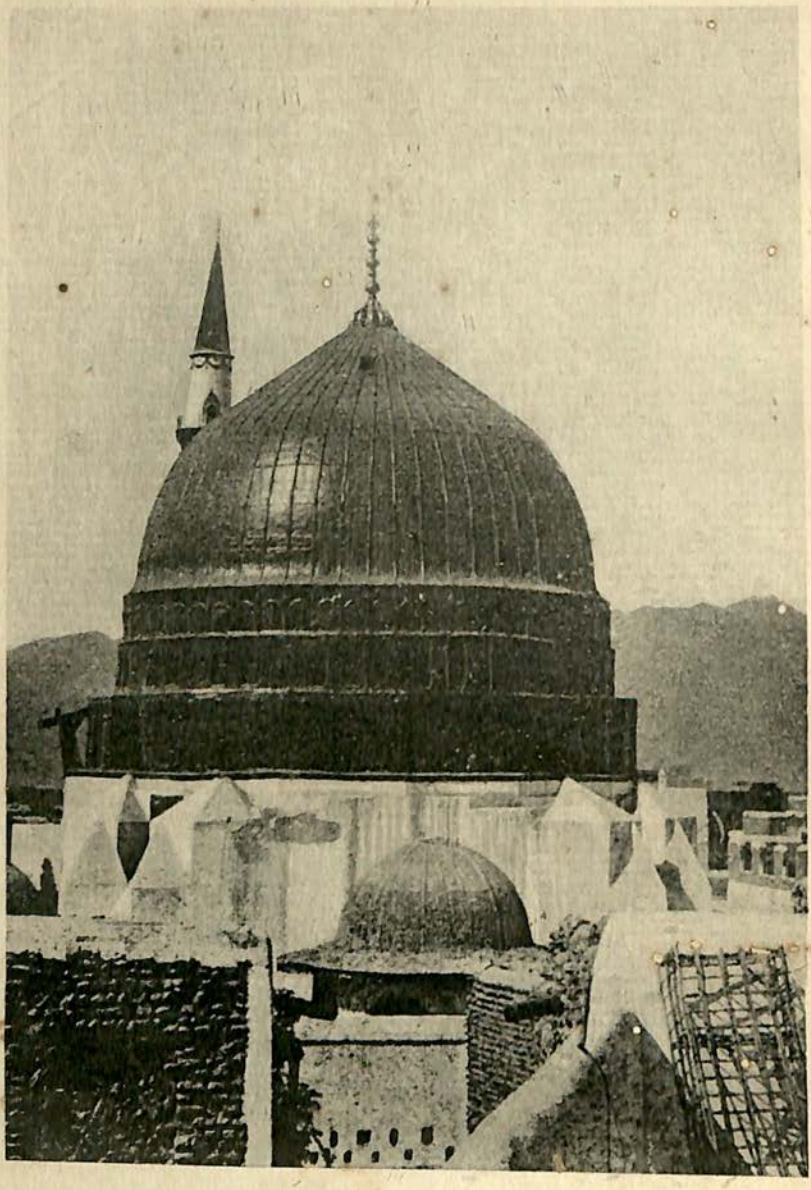


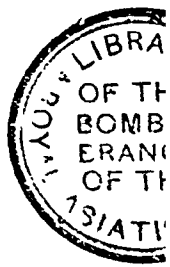
The Green Dome at El Medîna

From a print in "Mirât el Haramayn" Volume I, by permission of the Author, His Excellency General Ibrâhîm Rifaat Pasha.

THE HOLY CITIES OF ARABIA

By
ELDON RUTTER

VOLUME II



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المدينة المنورة

I

MEKKA TO ES-SAYL

IN the darkness of early night we were riding in labyrinthine ways, among the steep bases of the black mountains which mark the line between the Tihâma and the uplands of Central Arabia. A turn of the narrow valley had long since hidden the last little lights of Mekka's easternmost market-place (Sûk el Maala); and in my mind, reaching eagerly to a new freedom, the consciousness of the old city was already fading into unreality. Behind us lay Mekka. Nearer lay the Mount of Light—a sombre black shadow under the western stars. At its foot, the circular parapet of the well Bîr Barûd glimmered faintly; and before this extended a long low dam of stone, whose purpose is to deflect the floods from Mekka. Flowing to the northward, by devious barren ravines to Bîr el Ghanam, the waters eventually drain into Wâdi Fâtma. Our route lay eastward up the dry bed of the watercourse. In front of us stretched a valley of pale glimmering sand, winding among the buttresses of dim mountain masses. On either hand rose black shadows. Above us, the spangled indigo space of the sky stretched from peak to opposite peak of the overhanging mountains. The young moon was already hidden by the mountains to westward. The only sound was the soft "sish-sish" of the camels' feet in the sand, like the word *silence* repeatedly whispered.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by a harsh voice;

and almost immediately, out of the dimness ahead, five gaunt dromedaries came running. On their backs rode Arabs, bareheaded and swathed in scanty white coverings. As they flitted past in the starlight, thwacking the hollow ribs of their spectral beasts, they cried, "At Thy command, O God! Here am I!" with a slow throaty utterance. And one of them cried, "At Thy command, O God! Akhs! tobacco! O dog! At Thy command, O God! Here am I!" For, at the moment of their appearance, my companion, Ali, was smoking a cigarette, and these were Wahhâbîs. Ali hastily extinguished his cigarette, and we pressed forward without speaking, but the darkness closed quickly behind the white-clad riders, and they did not return.

We had left Mekka after sunset. My companions were Ali the 'Ataybi, Tallâl and Kharîs, Bedouins of the tribe of Banî Sufyân, poor but of noble lineage. Our intention was to travel to Et-Tâif by way of the Wâdi-l Yemânîya. Each of us rode on a delul, and the Bedouins drove two more of these animals before them in the way. I travelled, as I had lived in Mekka, as a native of the country. I took my notebooks with me, as these were too precious to be left out of my reach; but I had nothing else which a native of Mekka might not have carried.

As our camels paced forward we left the water-course and entered a valley which became gradually wider, until the inclosing hills receded from sight into the darkness on either hand. We now found ourselves on the threshold of a broad sandy plain, and all about us the white expanse of the ground was broken by clumps of camel grass and of the rue plant called Harmal, from which the Arabs brew an aperient

decoction. Occasionally, thorn bushes appeared, coming out of the dimness ahead; or they came upon us unawares, scratching at us with thin clutching hands, and passed again into the gloom behind us. Trotting steadily across the plain, we came, after midnight, to the hills which bordered its eastern side. These rose dimly before us. As we entered among the foothills, we passed on our right a small isolated rock, bearing some resemblance to a couched camel. It is known as En-Nâga, the She-camel. Passing this, we threaded our way between low hills of rock for two hours. The track then entered a narrow ravine, and beneath the feet of our deluls the ground exhibited an uneven surface of rock, rising steeply. This passage, which in places would scarcely permit one rider to pass another, is known as El Mudarraj. At certain points, the stones form a series of rough steps. Slowly our camels stumbled to the top of the rise, and then commenced a long descent to the village and oasis of Sola, which we reached before dawn.

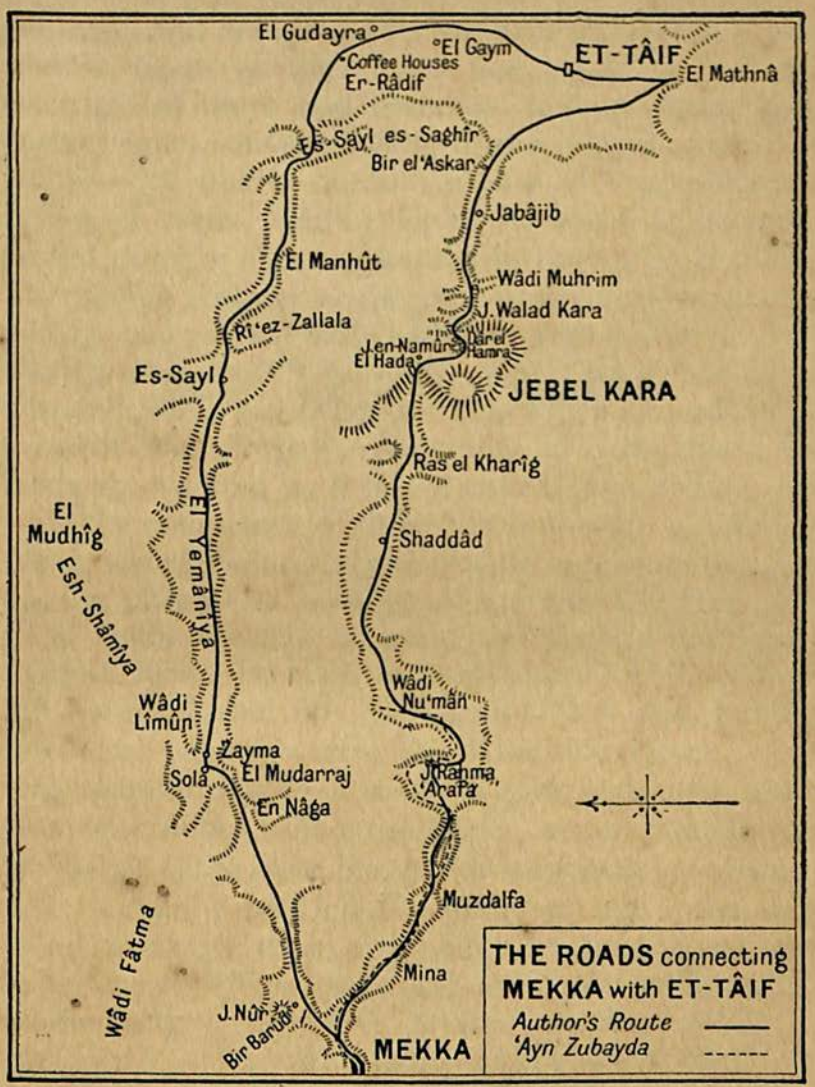
Sola is situated at the confluence of the two great watercourses known as Wâdi Esh-Shâmîya and Wâdi El Yemânîya—the Northern and the Southern. The former of these takes its rise to the northward of Mekka, at about half way between that city and El Medîna. Its central reach, from a place called El Mudhîg, to the point where it is joined by the Yemânîya near Sola, is known as Wâdi Lîmûn. Thereafter, it flows by way of 'Ayn Jedîda, 'Ayn Mubârak, Ez-Zubâra, Tarfa, El Khalas, Abu 'Irwa, 'Ayn El Jumûm, and Hadda, to the coastal plain at Bahra. The lower reach of the wâdi, extending from Tarfa to Bahra, is known as Wâdi Fâtma, and contains the most fertile oases of the Tihâma. Its many springs yield a

perennial supply of water. The eastern road from Mekka to El Medîna follows the Shâmîya for a considerable distance, from Sola northward.

The Wâdi El Yemânîya rises at Es-Sayl, towards Jabel Kara, and passing down by way of El Buhayta and Insûma to Zayma and Sola, it there bifurcates—one branch joining the Shâmîya. The other branch bears sharply to the westward, passes through the ravine of El Mudarraj, and, encircling Mekka at a distance of some fifteen miles to the northward, it joins the Wâdi Fâtma near Bîr el Ghanam.

It was dark at the time of my arrival at Sola, and I was therefore unable to determine, by personal observation, whether the Yemânîya actually joins the Shâmîya at that point, or whether the narrow ravine of El Mudarraj, westward, represents the sole route of its onward course. The enormous size of the Wâdi from Sola southward, however, led me to believe that when it is in flood, the main volume of its waters must flow straight into the Wâdi Esh-Shâmîya (or Wâdi Lîmûn) at Sola, the united stream thus passing down to Bahra under the name of Wâdi Fâtma. In this opinion I was confirmed by my companions.

As we descended into the basin and approached the village of Sola, I saw several irregular lines of half-ruined stone hovels standing deserted, with gaping doorways, among the weeds and rank scrub. A blur of tall date palms, with withered fronds, stood behind, over to eastward. About us lay stones and boulders, and between these were old half-obliterated scars of low banks and irrigation conduits. I calculated in the darkness that the wâdi might be a mile wide, and on either hand the hills rose up dimly. Signs of former cultivation continued until we reached Zayma,


El Gudayra
El Gaym
Coffee Houses
Er-Râdif
ET-TÂIF
El Mathnâ
Es-Sayl es-Saghîr
Bir el'Askar
Jabâjib
El Manhût
Wâdi Muhrim
J. Walad Kara
Ri'ez-Zallala
Jen-Namûr
El Hada
Kar el Hamra
Es-Sayl
JEBEL KARA
Ras el Kharîg
El Mudhîg
El Yemâniya
Esh-Shâmîya
Shaddâd
Wâdi Nu'mân
Wâdi Lîmûn
Zayma
Sola
El Mudarraj
En Nâga
J. Rahma
'Arafa
Muzdalfa
Wâdi Fâtima
Mina
J. Nûr
Bir Barûk
MEKKA
THE ROADS connecting MEKKA with ET-TÂIF
Author's Route
'Ayn Zubayda

a mile further. Here we encamped on a grassy slope, under a great rock, while the first glimmer of dawn began to appear in the eastern sky.

Zayma and Sola, together with the villages in Wâdi Lîmûn, formerly constituted one great oasis. Here were grown dates and bananas; millet, wheat, and barley; limes, oranges, melons and blackberries, together with half a dozen varieties of vegetables. A spring of water, welling from the rocks at Zayma, flowed down a narrow channel in the valley to Sola. This spring was dry at the time of my visit, however, and for two years it had yielded no water. The oasis of Zayma and Sola had fallen into decay, and was deserted. Only the Wâdi Lîmûn, which has an independent water-supply, remained in cultivation. Its fields are watered by a spring called ʿAyn Bardân.

At the confluence of the wâdis is the site of ancient Okâz, where the pre-Islamic Arabs were wont to meet for the purpose of holding an annual fair. Here the great Arabian bards, Amr-ul-Kays, Antara bin Shaddâd, El Hârith ibn Halliza, Tarafa bin El Abd, Zuhayr ibn Salma, Labîd ibn Rabîa, and El Aashâ, recited their epic poems, which, Ibn Khaldûn tells us, were subsequently written in letters of gold, and hung in the Kaaba at Mekka, where the Arabs, carried away by the eloquence of the lines, bowed down to them in worship.

At Mekka I had left the filling of our water-skin to Ali, and now, when our thoughts turned to rest and refreshment, I found that he had hung the skin to his saddle empty. Formerly it was unnecessary for a traveller to carry water from Mekka when marching to Sola, for at the latter place there was water in abundance. For two years past, however, there had been no water here. Probably, soon after his birth, Ali

had absorbed, among other lore, the fact that there was abundance of water at Zayma. His habits, therefore, when travelling on this road, had been formed accordingly. Two years ago the water had failed, but having lived for fifty years in the other tradition, Ali was incapable of filling his water-skin at Mekka when leaving for Zayma. Consequently we thirsted and starved.

The nearest water was three or four miles behind us in Wâdi Lîmûn. For himself Ali would rather have died of thirst than mount and ride that distance, and so would I at that moment. As we lay on the slope I pondered how I might prick his conscience. Presently I began to deliver a little discourse, which gained in warmth as I proceeded. As my guide (rafîk) in his country, was it not upon him to see that I neither starved nor died of thirst? Was it not upon him to produce water at my demand—aye, and to slay a sheep too, and procure vegetables from the peasants? Was he not known to every husbandman from Mekka to Et-Tâif?—"Aye, and to El Medîna, even unto Er-Riâdh and the Kasîm," interjected Ali.—By Allah! we had heard it said in Damascus and in Egypt that our brethren in the Island of the Arabs, and especially the 'Atayba, were wont to entertain lavishly those who came among them.—That little reference to the 'Atayba brought intelligence into his eye.—Was the report more than the truth? and must I now die, like a thirsty dog in the desert?

At this, the face of my companion assumed an expression of grave and stern decorum. Forthwith he arose, and drawing his old hair-cloth mantle about him, he turned and paced purposefully away. Tallâl and Kharîs lay among their camels in the hollow of

the valley, several hundred yards away. Thither proceeded Ali, at whose approach the grinning youths turned to bandy repartee; but I saw that their jesting was ill received, and soon they were both on their feet. Tallâl presently took our water-skin, and mounting bareback on one of the animals he went trotting carefully down the stony wâdi by the way we had come. Kharîs moved over to the far side of the watercourse, and began to gather sticks of brushwood. Ali seated himself to watch the remaining five camels.

Seeing matters proceeding thus satisfactorily, I stretched myself in the shadow of the rock and fell asleep. Presently I was aroused by the sound of somebody moving near me. Opening my eyes stealthily, I saw a small Bedouin boy fumbling at our bag of provisions. I continued to lie still, and feigned to be asleep. The youngster abstracted a wooden slab of bread from the bag, and having inspected it with an interest which was quite touching, he broke off a small piece which he allowed to drop to the ground. Having done this, he carefully replaced the loaf in the bag, and looked around him to make sure that he was not observed. Then, quickly picking up the fallen morsel, he popped it into his mouth and, not daring yet to indulge in the joy of chewing it, walked unconcernedly away.

The poor urchin wore nothing but a few little pieces of dirty rag strung on a cord about his waist, and round his neck a similar cord with even scantier rags depending from it. In fact, so meagre was his dress that that part of the body which is hidden even by primitive savages was in his case uncovered. He may have been twelve or thirteen years of age, but his wiry brown body exhibited a hunger-bitten leanness.

"O boy!" I called. "Come!"

He turned about like lightning, and faced me—a graceful bronze figure, in the early sunlight. The expression in his dark eyes and on his beautiful features was one of polite enquiry. One thin brown hand had gone to cover his nakedness, and in the manner of that gesture there was great dignity. He approached me a few paces.

"Welcome, O my son!" I said. "Who art thou?"

"I am of the Hudhayl—of Mas'ûd, and my name is Sâlim," said he, and his tone gave to the simple words a vaunt and a challenge.

"Come! I will give you to eat; but do not steal, lest perchance I beat you," I said.

A smile of devilment lit up his little face.

"Ha! Canst thou beat me?" cried he. "Art thou able?"

As I made to rise, he fled like a gazelle down the slope, and turned again, laughing, at the bottom. I called to him by name, inviting him to eat, but he would not come within reach of my hand. Finally I placed a piece of bread on a stone at a little distance, and then retired to my former position. Slowly he approached, like some shy graceful bird of prey. At a movement from me, he fled again, distrusting me and my invitations and laughter. Having advanced and retreated several times, he finally pounced upon the bread and carried it off to eat at a safe distance. As soon as he had finished his meal, he walked, skipped, and ran across the wâdi towards a mangy camel which was evidently grazing in his charge.

The Hudhayl is a tribe whose members, with their kinsmen the Thabata, are renowned as thieves and plunderers of caravans. They inhabit the trackless

mountain country which overlooks both sides of the Wâdi El Yemânîya, and by taking a position among the rocks which overhang the watercourse in its upper reaches, a mere handful of them can easily hold up a caravan of any size, or even a considerable armed force. This is one of the only two caravan roads which lead down from the central Arabian plateau to that part of the coastal plain on which lies the city of Mekka. The other road passes by way of the sayl-bed of the Northern Wâdi (Esh-Shâmîya). A third route leads down the steep face of Jebel Kara; but this way is impracticable for camels, save to the extent which I shall indicate when I come to describe it.

Presently Tallâl returned with a full water-skin, and calling to Kharîs to bring the firewood, Ali and I soon prepared tea.

Very pleasant was the prospect in this wide herb-decked valley. From the distant brow of the plateau a cold wind blew down the great wâdi; and the sun, no longer a baneful oppressor, was now become a dispenser of kindly comfort. Our banqueting-hall was the mile-wide primeval valley, our couch a grassy bank. Southward wound the grey watercourse, climbing to the uplands. Northward, a carpet of dull greens and browns shot with yellow and grey streaks lay spread in the valley bottom—the tangled desolation of a dead oasis. All about us swelled and rose the mountain buttresses, worn to the smooth rock where they dropped to the wâdi-bed, their further slopes covered now with a new bloom of green grass and scrub. This open world into which we had ridden in a single night, was informed with a freshness of new life. For, though the ancient oasis lay dead at our feet, above it the massive ramparts of rock rose triumphantly into the sky, their

brows chaplet-crowned by the hand of spring. We were in a new country, and sweet was the cool breeze which blew down the valley lying open before us to the uplands. Far behind us in the stifling plain, shut in by the mountains, lay Mekka.

"O Effendi!" cried Kharîs, as we sat to eat. "What is your thought about the Yemânîya? How like you this country?"

"Wallah, yâ akhi! this place pleases me greatly," I replied, "but let us have less of the 'effendi.' There are no effendis in the wilderness."

They expanded at that. The effendi is a subject of some civilised government, a Turk or an Egyptian, who if he be incapable of standing alone in a dispute, like an Arab on his merits as a man, will invoke the aid of his consul.

"Wallah, true!" said my companions. "In the desert there are no effendis."

Said Ali: "We are companions of the way, brothers; and this one is an Arabi, like yourselves."

Looking at the cordiality in their eyes, I almost wished for the moment that it were so.

Not for long could these youths remain serious. Said Kharîs to me in an audible tone: "This one," indicating his companion, Tallâl, "is unhappy. His woman taunts him because of his impotence. Hast thou not with thee a medicine to help him, O my uncle Ahmad?"

"Silence! O devil!" cried Tallâl, aiming a blow with his stick. "I will slay thee! O . . ."

"Look!" laughed Kharîs, delightedly. "Look at the Effendi examining his face!" For I had turned to see whether the expression of Tallâl's face would confirm the truth of his companion's remark. In the next mo-

ment the jesting had become a wrestling bout, and for five minutes the Bedouins rolled and squirmed on the ground.

This Kharîs was a merry youth. From the moment of our leaving Mekka until our arrival at Et-Tâif he scarcely ever ceased joking with his companion, save when he slept. There was no self-conscious emulation in his wit: he laughed and jested like a child. His was that spontaneous humour which may be seen among the simple poor all the world over: and what would their lives be without it!

At mid-afternoon we moved off, and pursued our way up the wâdi—usually among rocks and stones, but occasionally over coarse sand. The width of the watercourse was nearly half a mile for the most part, until, as we neared its southern end, it narrowed to a width varying between 500 yards and 300 yards. Several peaks of the bordering mountains under which we passed rose to a height of more than 2,000 feet above the torrent-bed.

At sunset a large flock of white-fleeced and robust little sheep passed, driven by three Arabs on foot, one of whom led a camel laden with food and water-skins and other gear. They came from the neighbourhood of Bîsha, and were driving down to Mekka, where the sheep would be sold during the Hajj, to be sacrificed at Mina by the pilgrims. The drivers enquired of us concerning the prices then ruling in the Holy City, and my companion Ali, being himself a dealer in live-stock, was able to inform them. He advised them to remain where they were for another month or two, for the sake of the grazing, as there was every prospect of the price improving as the Pilgrimage became more imminent. This advice was not so disinterested as it seemed

at the time, for I afterwards gathered from Ali that he and some of his cronies intended to travel up this road before the Pilgrimage, in order to purchase stock which was being driven down to Mekka. By intercepting the drovers before they reached the market-town, where competition would become a more important factor, Ali expected to be able to purchase cheaply.

At one point in the wâdi we passed by a dyke, built out into the torrent-bed and converging to the left bank. This directed some of the waters of the stream, when in flood, into a narrow ravine, through which it flowed to a patch of cultivated ground beyond.

Not far from this was an enormous boulder, lying in the wâdi-bed at the foot of the cliff. Its weight may have been several hundreds of tons. This, said my companions, is the Nomad's Tomb. Upon a day a Bedouin who had stolen treasure from the Great Mosque in Mekka rode by this way, fleeing from the City. As he went under the cliff at this point, the great boulder fell upon him from above, crushing him and his delul beneath it. He remains entombed there to this day. Until recently, said they, the bleached pastern and fetlock bones of a camel's fore-foot projected from beneath the mighty stone. A string of camels passed us, going down to Mekka. One of the animals was laden with skins of melted butter, and its owner enquired urgently of us concerning the price of samn in the Holy City.

As we advanced further, the banks on either hand became less precipitous, until at sunset we climbed out of the watercourse and found ourselves on a small sandy plain surrounded by low hills. The wâdi stretched across this from the south-west, in the form of a wide shallow bed, floored with pebbles. It rises in

the hills to southward. Coarse grass and scrub clothed the plain.

At this point, which is known as Es-Sayl, lies the junction of three great caravan routes—those from Mekka, Et-Tâif, and Nejd. On the southern bank of the wâdi stood a few old ruinous stone huts, and towards these we made our way.

My Bedouin companions called to one Muhammad; and presently a Bedouin youth, clad in old ragged garments, issued from one of the huts. This Muhammad lived here with his girl wife, and supported himself by selling tea, sugar, coffee, and other simple articles to the caravaners.

Having unloaded our baggage, we passed into one of the huts. The floor within was littered with a sort of hay of camel grass, and on this Ali and I flung our blankets. Presently the boy Muhammad brought in a small iron pan full of burning faggots. Kharîs had carried with him a great iron tray or brazier on legs, which he had purchased in Mekka. This he now brought into the hut, and emptying Muhammad's fire into it, he piled on more sticks and blew upon the burning wood. Soon we had tongues of flame leaping up to the old thatched roof. The hut quickly filled with smoke, and breathing became tentative. At last I was obliged to lower my head nearly to the floor to avoid being suffocated. However, the fight for air, added to the heat of the fire, quickly made us warm, while outside the hut the temperature was somewhere in the region of zero. The Arabs breathed the smoke-laden air without apparent discomfort; and this struck me as remarkable, for the deserts in which they live are washed by the purest air on earth. My companions appeared like dusky sprites in the cave of a magician, sitting or

standing in the red light of the blaze. Frequently one or other of them would hold a foot or hand in the flames, and keep it there for several seconds before withdrawing it; or one would lift up the skirt of his smock to warm his bare thighs, unmindful of his nakedness—for the desert men wear no trousers. One of them ran outside to strew down fodder to the camels, and, running in again, leaped up to the fire as though he would jump into it. Soon they were warm, and flinging off their old and worn hair-cloth mantles, they fell to grinding a few coffee berries. Muhammad brought in more fuel, and also four coffee finjâns for our use. Kharîs produced a small linen bag of coarse flour, and mixed some of this with a little water, and then kneaded the dough and divided it into small cakes of bread. These they toasted in the glowing fire, and gobbled them up hot, first handing pieces to Ali and me. The poor stuff was charred on the outside, and scarcely warm at the centre. This was all their food for the journey. They had no other, save their meagre hot coffee-water. Soon the latter was ready, and finjâns half filled with it were handed first to Ali and me as being their guests. This is the hospitality of the poor generous nomads. It is the generosity of the needy. To honour and succour the guest is the first law in their ethical code, and faithfully they obey it. No matter how many guests there be at the feast, say they, there is always room for one more.

Having refreshed ourselves with the Bedouin's hospitable poor bounty, Ali and I opened our provision sack. The smoke in the hut had now become too dense even for the comfort of my companions, and I told them to remove the piece of hair-cloth which hung in the doorway, to allow some fresh air to enter. We then

borrowed an iron pot, a foot deep and fifteen inches wide, from Muhammad. With the aid of this we soon had a mess of rice and lentils boiling merrily. Kharîs attended to the stoking arrangements; Tallâl stirred the contents of the pot; Ali searched among our victuals for a few onions, which having found he threw into the pot; while I scoured our tin dish. Presently, having passed the test of Ali's palate, the scalding mess was poured into the dish: samn was added, and each man dug in his unwashed claw. I was at a disadvantage, as I found the porridge far too hot to hold comfortably, still less to swallow. However, by commencing operations well to my right, near the imaginary boundary of my neighbour Tallâl's domain, I was able to call some slight attention to my presence. I made a chasm between Tallâl's territory and my own, which he was too polite to ignore. I felt fairly confident that my domain would not be violated on the left flank, as my neighbour on that side was Ali, the amount of whose salary for a week or two to come depended on my goodwill. Such are the artifices to which Arab cooking and table-manners will bring a hungry man; for, although the Arabs will frequently place tit-bits from the feast before one who eats with them, they give no quarter in the general scramble to clean the dish. In the towns it is not so, save among the poorest classes; but the desert is the home of ceaseless ravenous hunger.

As soon as I had eaten my last fistful, Kharîs ran his forefinger all round the dish to secure any traces of food that remained. We then proceeded to brew tea. Ali began to roll cigarettes; and, Muhammad having reported a complete absence of Wahhâbî at the station, all of us were soon smoking in sinful happiness. Looking around me at the dusky faces of my com-

panions shining in the firelight, I realised something of their simple pleasure. I thought, "Whatever ease the future may hold for me, I shall never experience a greater sense of comfort than at this moment."

Presently a dim shadow stole silently into the doorway. It was an old black slave, bent and grey with age. 'Ali found him a piece of our Mekkan bread—gone hard as wood in the dry atmosphere. Then, sitting down to munch this meagre supper, he told us, with many an exclamation of praise to God, that his master had been among those massacred by the Wahhâbîs at Et-Tâif. He himself was left destitute and homeless, as nobody cared to claim so old and useless a possession. Now he would go down on his feet to Mekka, trusting to the beneficence of Allah to protect him in the lonely way, and provide for him in His City at the end of the journey.

The fire burning low, we closed the doorway of the hut and, wrapping ourselves in our mantles and blankets, we were soon fast asleep in the hay.

II

ET-TÂIF

BEFORE sunrise, we arose and prepared to remove. The atmosphere was bitterly cold, especially by contrast with the stagnant heat of Mekka, but in it there was an upland buoyancy. Having broken our fast, we mounted and rode towards the pass which winds through the mountains to the plateau on which stands Et-Tâif. A party of Eastern Bedouins, encamped on the plain, were in the act of putting on the ihrâm as we passed them; for Es-Sayl is one of the stations at which travellers going down to Mekka are obliged to assume the pilgrim dress.

The pass which we now entered lay in a narrow ravine, and the track presented an uneven surface of smooth and slippery rocks. It is known as Rî' Ez-Zallala. Further on, we came to rocks on either side of the way, upon which rough inscriptions in the Kûfic character had been scored. Here, at a distance of eight or ten yards to the right-hand (western) side of the way, stood a massive granite boulder, upon the smooth hitherward face of which a great, more than natural-sized, human figure in a squatting posture had been roughly engraved. On either side of it were lines of writing, in some ancient character with which I was not acquainted. Between the camel-track and the boulder, the ground rose sharply and was covered with small rocks, among which sprung thorny brambles and coarse camel grass, forming a thicket two or three feet

high. From the path, therefore, the graven rock was seen at a height, as it were a picture hung upon a wall. Also, the engraving is extremely shallow, and is scarcely discernible at a distance. For these two reasons I should not have observed it had not my companions pointed out to the stranger this mystical mark of the ancients. In the sun countries one looks upward but briefly and seldom, and in those half-blinded glances only the most striking landmarks are clearly seen. The carving is in the Rî' Ez-Zallala, nearly at the top of the pass. I dismounted and forced my way through the thicket to examine it.

Passing by, we descended a rock-strewn way into a tortuous winding sayl-bed, hill-walled closely on either hand. We came, then, to a narrow ascending causeway, El Manhût. This is a paved way, perhaps four yards in width, which extends for a distance of some two miles. It is constructed low on the side of a chain of hills above the ravine, and is walled on the side which overlooks the precipice. The pavement in places consists of a series of shallow steps. Gaining the summit of this pass, we shambled down the southern declivity into a ravine, Et-Talh. Soon again we left this, and climbed up a low ridge into a maze of shale hills whose strata lay for the most part in a vertical position. Anon we descended into a sandy watercourse of considerable breadth, Es-Sayl es-Saghîr, along whose edges grew shrubs and grasses. After following its course for some distance we rode up the rocky bank and continued southward through a burnt-up country of arid rocks.

We now came onto a high plateau, and in front of us, to southward, stretched a wide undulating expanse of bright yellow sand. To westward lay a low chain of rocky hills; and on the plain before us, isolated heaps

and pinnacles of great rocks emerged from the sand. One such heap was four or five hundred feet in height, and was composed of enormous boulders of granite, smooth-sided and rounded like gigantic pebbles. On its summit stood a great square mass, surmounted by a thin upright pinnacle, as it were a church and steeple; and gazing upon it from a distance of several miles, I made ready in my mind to observe closely that old ruined castle and watch-tower of the ancients, when we should pass by it. But an hour afterwards, as we came crawling over the hot sand under the foot of that great stone-heap, I found that the castle and the watch-tower were nothing but cyclopean masses of unhewn granite, set up in that seemingly unnatural formation by no hand of man. It is called, said Khârîs, Er-Râdif. Here and there on the sand lay massive boulders of sandstone of a yellow ochre colour; and on one such I saw a lizard, two feet in length from nose to tail-tip, and in colour a bright Prussian blue. It lay on the yellow rock like some great barbaric jewel, rendering glittering homage to the sun.

It chanced that the atmosphere on this upland plain was perfectly still, and now the sun beat down upon us with peculiar venom. The variations of temperature on the Tâif plateau are very extreme, and the natives of the place say that there the sun is more dangerous to health than it is in Mekka. They are careful to keep their heads adequately covered.

In the midst of the plain we came to the Coffee Houses. These are some ten or twelve ruined stone huts, which, many years ago, were coffee-khans in which travellers between Et-Tâif and Mekka might procure refreshments. These inns were plundered during the first Wahhâbî invasion of the Hijâz, and

have remained deserted for more than a hundred years. Continuing on our way, we presently passed the village of El Gudayra, which lay among a growth of trees in the distance, to eastward.

Presently we took to a track which lay sunk between low banks. To westward appeared the hovels and straggling palm-trees of the village El Gaym; while several half-ruined houses of some size, enclosed within outlying walls, were dotted about the landscape. These farmhouses appeared to be deserted, and few remains of cultivation or husbandry were to be seen in the yards and fields which surrounded them. Isolated figures of men, camels, and asses, moved hither and thither in the wide prospect; and the sound of dogs barking came faintly through the air from several points. Presently the white façades of two or three tall houses came into view on our right front. These were houses of Et-Tâif.

We now turned into a broad road which led, in a direction somewhat to the west of south, to the gate called Bâb Shûbra, or Bâb Es-Sayl, in the northern wall of the city. To our left stood a tall and splendid palace, four storeys in height and crowned by an ornamental roof-parapet. It was of a glaring whiteness, being covered with smooth white plaster; and the central windows of each wing were protected by handsome casements of ornamental woodwork. The garden about this palace was enclosed by a fine wall of pillars, and beyond this, and stretching nearly to the walls of Et-Tâif, a mile away, lay orchards and cultivated fields. This building is the property of a former Sharîf of Mekka, one Ali Pasha, who has resided in Egypt since his deposition by the Turkish Sultan in 1908.

Proceeding along the straight road to the city gate, we passed by the mud walls of another orchard to our right. Beyond this, to westward, rose the walls of a large and lofty stone shed, the roof of which had collapsed and fallen to the ground. This was once the hangar which housed the aeroplanes belonging to King Husâyn. Beyond the hangar, to the south-west, lay the district of Najma, consisting of several ruined houses. The largest of these ruins was to have been the new summer palace of the Sharîf 'Aun Er-Rafîk (Amîr of Mekka, 1299-1323 A.H.), but he died before its completion. Now the great skeleton walls stand silently under the sun, while nought but the lizard and the crow, and the hard slow-creeping shadows, ever moves in those half-built halls. Behind this new ruin lay a patch of desert soil, with a wall built about it and a well dug. Within that wall, as without, the soil was of a leprous dryness and aridity; but signs of past labour of husbandmen were seen in the half-obliterated plough-grooves, and the skeletons of trees undergoing their slow doom of petrifaction or decay. Immediately without the Sayl Gate stood a large building known as Abdulla Pasha's house. This was now occupied by the Wahhâbî governor of the town.

We passed in unhindered through the open gateway, above which were chambers for the guard, their walls slitted for musketry. Bearing to the right we picked our way between the crumbling ruins of several large houses, and couched our camels before the door of an old house whose doorway was already sunk a foot deep by the rising of the ground-level outside. The western sky was orange with the sunset light as the owner of the house welcomed us in. Abdul Latîf, for such was our host's name, conducted us to a room on the ground

floor. The earthen floor of this apartment was covered with lengths of thick hair-cloth, for the weaving of which the people of Et-Tâif are famous. The mud walls had been whitewashed at some remote period, but were now mellowed by age and lamp-black.

Abdul Latîf and my companion Ali were cronies of former days.

"Welcome! How is thy state, O Ali? How thy state, O Effendi?" enquired our host repeatedly, bustling about the room. "We will carry in thy baggage, and then would you like to drink tea? . . . Welcome! . . . Came you by way of the Yemânîya? . . . Ha! the Yemânîya! Sit here at your ease! . . . Welcome! . . . How is thy state?"

The baggage was brought in, and then we pushed, pulled, and persuaded Kharîs and Tallâl into the apartment with us, for they displayed a loutish shyness at the idea of entering between walls, protesting their desire to ride at once to the camping-place of their tribe in the Wâdi El Agîg. But they had been such good companions that I could not let them go without a stirrup-cup to warm their vitals against the cold of the approaching night. More than that, I wanted the rascals' company and their jokes for another evening, and to be led by them in the scramble for our evening rice. Such boon companions I have never seen before, nor since. All the way from Mekka they had laughed and joked together, appealing to Ali and me in support of their sallies. No great wit was theirs—only a natural, almost childish, prattle; and though their words were often gross of meaning, they seemed entirely lacking in the townsman's coarseness. They spoke with tongues of the desert, and their bearing displayed

an attractive grace and carelessness which nothing diminished.

So we sat down to our meal, as we had done on the preceding night in the little smoky stone hut at the Sayl. Having eaten our rice, we sat on drinking tea and smoking—first making sure that the door and shutters were fast closed against Wahhâbite intrusion. The two Bedouins jested together as usual, and laughed to see "Shaykh Ahmad" looking at their impish faces to learn the effect of their words on each other. Occasionally I would ask them a question concerning the country we had passed through, and they answered, like children eager to outdo one another.

I thanked heaven that with these careless jesters I had no need to sustain the religious character of a pilgrim, especially as ablutions would have had to be performed in water which was nearly at freezing point, and the old-fashioned Muslims disapprove of the use of a towel after ceremonial washing. Nobody had mentioned prayer since we left Mekka, and I had not performed that rite since leaving Zayma. Now, closing our door and shutters, we sat at our tea-bibbing and smoking, while the muaddins outside chanted the adân for the 'eshâ prayer.

"Dost not pray, Uncle Ali?" asked Kharîs in mocking tones.

"I pray—naturally!" replied Ali.

"Rise then, and pray!" cried Tallâl, "and fear Allah, my boy!"

"I will pray, if it please Allah," said Ali, without making any attempt to rise.

"Up then, and pray!" cried the Bedouins again.

"In a moment," said Ali, and added: "I am not in a state of cleanness, brothers!"

"Ha!" cried the ribald youths, shrieking with laughter. "Hast known a woman? Where is she?"

"Silence, O youngsters!" commanded Ali, in some alarm. "Before we removed from Mekka, I companied with my woman, and it is known to you that we left Mekka of a sudden! . . . Not so? . . . And at Zayma is no water found! So how could I bathe? It was not possible! . . . Therefore, I cannot pray!"

"We will wash thee, O my uncle!" cries Kharîs, making to rise. "Come, O Tallâl! Catch hold of thine uncle!"

"Enough, O boys!" I cried. "Uncle Ali suffers from the rheumatism, and because of that he dare not bathe. Not so, Uncle Ali?"

"Ay, wallah!" affirmed Ali, without a wink, filling again the finjâns with tea. "Cold water kills me, O Gathering! and Allah does not impose an obligation upon His slaves, save that which is easy."

At last we grew sleepy, and the Bedouins rose to depart. I had paid the full hire of our animals to their owners in Mekka, but these poor youths had no direct share in it. I therefore pressed upon Tallâl a mejîdi to divide between them. He refused to accept it; but we bundled him out of the door with the coin in his hand, and his companion with him. They gave us their hands in salutation and then mounted. Ali and I returned to our room, and wrapping ourselves in our cloaks and blankets slept till morning.

At sunrise my companion and I despatched our frugal meal of dry bread and hot milk, and then put on our mantles and left the town, on foot, by the south-western gate, called Bâb Er-Rî'. My intention was to visit a Sharîf of the house of Ghâlib, named Abdulla, whom I had met in Mekka, and his cousins Tâjeddîn

and Surûr, all of whom were then living in a house in the beautiful district of orchards known as El Mathnâ, which lies at a distance of some four miles due south of the city. Passing out of the gate we found ourselves on rocky broken ground of an almost chalky whiteness, quite devoid of vegetation. Before us on the plain, a mile to southward, stood a number of well-built stone houses, some of which were large and even handsome. This was the village, or suburb, known as Es-Salâma, in which are the summer residences of a number of wealthy Mekkans. One of the best of these houses belongs to the Shaybi, Custodian of the Key of the Kaaba. A rough track, made by the constant passing of camels and donkeys, led through this suburb to southward. A mile to north-westward of the gate Bâb er-Rî', at which I stood surveying the scene, lay another suburb known as Garwa. This lay close without the walls of the Turkish barracks, and here the officers of the Othmânli garrison formerly resided.

Beyond Es-Salâma, in a direction slightly east of south, a large green field of young grain was visible; and behind this stretched a dark mass of orchard trees under the barren foot of the encircling mountains. That was El Mathnâ. Beginning with the wheat-field, at a distance of two or three miles from the town walls, it extends for a couple of miles to the foot of the mountains, and at one point it is a mile and a half in width.

We left the city gate and proceeded along the narrow track. After passing Es-Salâma we came upon loose coarse sand, but abreast of the wheat-field we were again on firm ground. Further along were low mud walls enclosing orchards of fruit trees, grape vines, and rose bushes. Being actually among the

orchards, I now realised what I could not, up till then, trust my unaccustomed eyes to believe. All the peach trees and almond trees bore a soft load of massed pink blossom. How wonderful to find such beauty of spring in the burning sterile land of Arabia! I said to my companion that what the people of Mekka say of Et-Tâif is indeed true, that it is a garden of the gardens of Damascus, transported hither by the hands of angels. Under the budding and blossoming trees we went, and all about us the air was singing with new life, and the trilling of starlings and the cooing of doves. Rich green birsîm was growing under the trees, through which little streams of water trickled and rippled—flowing out of the main channel of a spring which issued from among the black and burnt-sienna rocks of the overhanging mountain. I did not know whether to regret not delaying my visit until the trees were in full leaf, or to be thankful that it was February with the peach trees in blossom. Within those orchard walls no trace of barren soil was to be seen. All was obscured from wall to wall, by young green herbage. Out of these green lakes rose lines of dark tree-trunks which, spreading into a horizontal framework of branches at the height of a man, held up their masses of blossoms to the sun. Further along were fields of rose bushes. These supply the perfume sellers of Mekka with petals for the distillation of the "atr-el ward," which is sold at a high price to pilgrims. We passed by fig trees, pomegranate, quince, apricot trees, and grape vines. The latter produce magnificent grapes of a golden yellow colour, sweet and luscious. These grapes are as large and fine as any of those produced in Syria. If they have a fault, it is that they are somewhat too sweet. Among the orchards were

several stone-built houses, most of which were partially ruined.

Proceeding along a narrow walled lane between two orchards, we presently came to a two-storeyed house the porch of which was built over the roadway. This we entered, and an old black slave rose from a bench in the gloom, and returned our salutation. He then ushered us into a small room furnished with carpets and cushions. Low windows extended along one side, and throwing back the shutters the slave discovered to us a beautiful view of the green garden beyond. Soon my friend, the Sharîf Abdulla, made his appearance, and having greeted us cordially, he ordered coffee to be brought. Learning that I was lodged in a public inn at Et-Tâif, he would not hear of my remaining there, but said he would have accommodation prepared for me in a small house at the upper end of the Mathnâ, where I might remain until my return to Mekka. Shortly afterwards we left, promising to return with our baggage before sunset. It was near midday as we returned across the white plain to the city, and I found again that venomous quality in the heat of the sun. This was the more disconcerting because we had been shivering in an icy wind until an hour after sunrise.

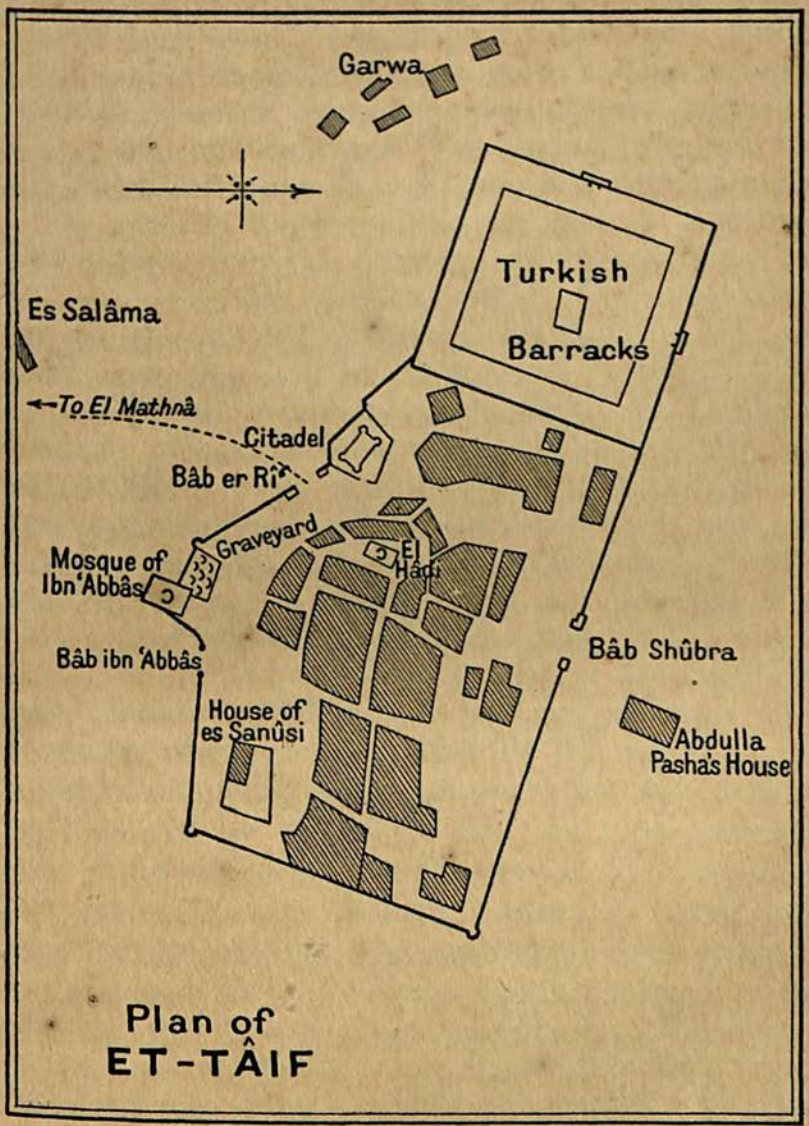
Soon after our arrival at our last night's lodging-place, Abdul Latîf, the inn-keeper, brought in a large dish piled high with Turkish pilau. Ali told me that this attention was because he had informed Abdul Latîf of our acquaintance with the Sharîfs. He hinted that our host took me to be a kinsman of theirs, but I strongly suspected that he had himself deliberately told Abdul Latîf that such was the case. The descendants of Muhammad, whether of exalted or of lowly station, are highly respected throughout the Islamic

world. This is the only aristocracy that the democratic society of Islam knows. A sultan may, without loss of dignity, rise or show other marks of respect in the presence of a sharîf. Even this prestige, however, is contrary to the spirit of Islam, in which piety alone can confer eminence.

The Muhammadans make a distinction between the sharîf and the sayyid, which they account for in the following manner:—The fourth khalîfa, Ali, had two sons, El Hasan and El Husayn, by the Prophet's daughter, Fâtma. Both of these youths are named "sharîf" (noble), but the first-named, El Hasan, is considered to merit precedence over his brother by reason of the fact that after the death of their father, he was proclaimed khalîfa by the people of Kûfa. The descendants of El Hasan are therefore accorded the title of "sharîf" (pl. shurafâ or ashrâf), while the descendants of El Husayn are given that of "sayyid" (pl. sâda) which means "chief."

The pilau was excellent: a hill of rice surmounted by a boiled chicken, together with raisins and pieces of onion; the whole sprinkled with a condiment composed of spices and peppers. After this banquet—at which Abdul Latîf joined us, asking pardon of God for indulging in the pleasure of listening to our compliments—we stretched ourselves on the hair-cloth carpets and smoked and drank tea. Later, we went out to explore the city.

Et-Tâif is enclosed within a wall of an oblong form, built of stones and mud. This wall was built recently by order of King Husayn. It is inadequate to its purpose, being very thin, constructed largely of mud, and for the greater part of its length devoid even of loopholes for musketry. The only bastions are those at the



Plan of
ET-TÂIF

gates and at the four corners. Such a structure would have been extremely useful for the purpose of inclosing a farmyard, or similar property, held on short lease. Its two long sides face, roughly, north and south. Close against its western side there is a large barrack square surrounded by a strong wall of stone, and containing quarters for troops. This barrack was built by the Turks, and is now in bad repair and is untenanted.

The gates in the town wall are three in number: Bâb es-Sayl, Bâb Ibn 'Abbâs, and Bâb er-Rî'. The last two are in the northern wall, and between them lies the Mosque of Ibn 'Abbâs. The latter is a handsome structure, built in the form of an open court, surrounded on all sides by cloisters. Two domes which formerly surmounted the tomb-chambers of Abdulla bin 'Abbâs and one of the Prophet's infant children, had been demolished by the Wahhâbîs. A window, or iron-barred aperture in the wall of the mosque, looked into the vault, and many stains and smudges of a dark-brown colour disfigured the white walls of that corner of the sacred building. For to this hallowed spot a number of 'ulemâ and students of religion had retreated when the Wahhâbîs sacked the town. A mosque containing tombs was scarcely a sanctuary to be respected by Wahhâbîs, even the most tolerant. The wild horde surged into the gateway of the mosque, and crying "God is Greatest," killed all whom they found in the building. The final refuge of the peaceful students and their professors was this corner by the window, and here they were massacred without mercy by their co-religionists, in the Name of the God Whom they and their murderers were supposed to serve. The dull brown stains remain, an eloquent writing on the wall.

Some four hundred people—men, women, and children—are said to have been massacred when the Wahhâbîs entered the town. The Sharîf Ali, eldest son of King Husayn, had appealed to the civil population to assist in the defence; and then leaving them to their own resources he had fled, accompanied by a disorderly rabble of troops, to Mekka, without the unfortunate householders being at first aware of his departure. Left thus in the lurch, those of the inhabitants who remained in the town flung open the northern gate to the Wahhâbîs upon the promise of a general amnesty. This appears to have taken place after the Nejders had already made a breach in the wall of the barracks. Having entered, the Bedouins fell to looting the bazaar and private houses; but it is alleged that before this the owners of the premises had met them with armed resistance. One survivor assured me, however, that the robbers were not fired upon until they broke into private houses; each individual householder then attempted to defend himself and his women with any weapon he had at hand. Whatever the facts may be, it is certain that no quarter was given to anybody the invaders could lay hands on, regardless of age or sex. Men and women found in the houses were spared until they had revealed to the spoilers the places where their treasures were hidden. Then they were flung upon the floor, and their throats were cut like cattle. This done, the corpses were stripped of their clothing, mutilated, and thrown into the street. A few escaped by dressing in Bedouin clothes and winding white turban-cloths about their heads. These mixed with the horde and pretended to belong to them. One of these, who was an eye-witness of the butchery, said: "The Wahhâbîs slew them, wallah!

like sheep. And if one shrieked for fear of death, the 'brother,' while he sawed at his victim's throat, cried, 'Ha! dost thou squeal? And I am sending thee to Paradise! Of a truth, thou art no Muslim. Then die, thou unbeliever!' "

Some four thousand people, by barricading their doors, managed to keep the raiders at bay all that night (6th Safar, 1343 A.H.). On the following morning the Wahhâbî leaders, among whom was Khâlid ibn Luway, a sharîf, who had previously joined Ibn Sa'ûd as the result of a quarrel between himself and King Husayn, entered Et-Tâif; and as the mob had by that time spent some of its fury, they were able to take command of the situation. The surviving inhabitants were ordered to leave their houses and surrender themselves to the invaders. Men and women were then stripped of jewellery and other valuables, and the whole number were imprisoned in the Shûbra Palace (or Ali Pasha's House), a mile to the northward of the town. After being kept there for some days they were released, but not being allowed to return to Et-Tâif they went to Mekka or Jidda. The deserted town was then closed by the Wahhâbîs, and so it remained for two months. The Nejd bands stayed encamped upon the plain round about until the order came from Ibn Sa'ûd in Er-Riâdh to advance on Mekka.

I entered several of the deserted houses, and was struck by the fact that in most of them a hole had been knocked in the wall, usually in a lower room, near the ground. This, said my guide, was done in order to unearth secreted valuables; for in this country, where banking is regarded as being akin to usury, a man keeps his money hidden in a hole in the ground or in the wall.

Et-Tâif was now almost devoid of inhabitants. The open spaces, and the narrow alleys which lost themselves among dilapidated houses, were strewn with rags, stones, and pieces of mud-brick, mixed with the dirty sand which formed the surface of the ground. Shutters and doors hung crazily open, or were entirely missing, and on the crumbling steps within the houses lay a sordid strewage of rags and rubble.

Et-Tâif has always been half deserted in the winter months, as it is principally a summer resort of the Mekkans, who return to the capital before the advent of the rains. Now, however, it was like a city of the dead. In the market-place, where half a dozen shops still remained open, a few ragged figures slouched in the dust, or sat to drink coffee and groan in their misery. A Wahhâbî passes scowling down the dusty street, and the tongues of the sitters are silent, but terrible are the curses that gleam in their eyes. A few poor things of food were displayed for sale in the shops: a few mantles and gowns and pairs of sandals. Every morning there appears a man who infuses a gleam of life into the stagnation: it is he who sells hot, newly baked bread. Another is the seller of milk. It is painful to see how carefully the purchaser fingers the poor coin in his gaunt hand, and how slowly he hands it over. The original inhabitants are of the tribe of Thagîf.

At el 'asr we went to the Mosque of El Hâdi, and prayed among a score of these ragged half Bedouin people of the ruined town. How they breathed out the Name of God in that wretched place! This remnant of the populace seemed to have abandoned all hope of earthly ease, but like true Semites they never forgot that everything is from Allah. It may be that

summer coming round once more and a profitable Hajj completed, the Mekkans grown stout-hearted, will ascend again in gay caravans, and bustle and prosperity will return to Et-Tâif.

After prayers, Ali pointed out to me the idol-stone of El-Lât, which was worshipped by the Arabs before the revelation of Islâm. It lies near the town wall, without the gate of Ibn 'Abbâs, and is a mere shapeless mass of granite. Within the walls at that corner (the south-eastern) stands a meeting-house of the Sanûsi dervishes. A second idol, El 'Uzza, which was formerly to be seen near the fort, or citadel, had been smashed up and removed by the Wahhâbîs. The fort is a very strongly-built structure, but it is now somewhat dilapidated. It is situated on a rising ground within the walls, at the right-hand or western side of the gate Er-Rî'. Here Midhat Pasha, the Turkish nationalist, was imprisoned until his death, by order of the Sultân Abdul Hamîd. The large low windows of the tower-chambers in which he was confined lend to the place a light and airy freshness unusual in prison cells. The fort is said to have been built by the Sharîf Ghâlib.

A Turkish bath in the eastern quarter of the town was in ruins. Gaily coloured tiles were falling from the walls, and the luxuriant oasis painted on the ceiling was fast becoming a desert.

Returning to our inn, we loaded our baggage on a donkey which had been procured by Ali, and passed out of the town on our way to El Mathnâ. Ali was acquainted with the situation of our new quarters, and accordingly, he led the way among the orchards. We passed through these until we came to a wâdi-bed, along either side of which, at the foot of the enclosing mountains, ran a narrow strip of cultivated ground.

These gardens were protected by thick stone walls, forming artificial embankments to the watercourse; and behind them, at intervals, rose the houses of the landowners. Several stone steps led up to a door in the wall near to each house.

Our destination proved to be the last orchard on the right-hand side of the wâdi. The door was opened in response to our knocking, and Abdulla, accompanied by his cousins, Surûr and Tâjeddîn, greeted us from the threshold. I entered the garden, and seated myself beneath a peach tree with the three sharîfs; while Ali placed our baggage in a little house which was built on the wall at the upper end of the orchard, overlooking the water-course. Having drunk coffee, brought by the wife of one of the peasants, we crossed the orchard and mounted a flight of steps to the house. The latter consisted of three rooms, the windows of two of which overlooked the wâdi, while from the third the garden was visible. This house became my quarters for nearly a week—until my departure from Et-Tâif. The rooms were furnished with cushions, and for pictures we had the open casements, framing vistas of pink-blossoming trees against a background of black and brown hillside and blue sky. Looking about for something to read, I found on the window-sill a book on jurisprudence by the Hanafi faqîh, Ibn 'Abidîn. Within the pages of the old leather-bound volume were the portraits of two English actresses, cut from some illustrated newspaper.

At night, when we had eaten, and out hosts had returned to their own house, Ali and I would sit and smoke. My companion was of an understanding and liberal disposition, and he had served a comprehensive apprenticeship to life. As a young man he had left his

tribe, the 'Atayba, and had settled in Mekka as a dealer in camels and other live-stock. He had subsequently taken service with one Sa'îd Bey, a sharîf, whom he had accompanied to Constantinople. The manner of his making that journey was somewhat dramatic. It occurred many years ago, when 'Aun er-Rafîk was Amîr of Mekka. One night a slave brought a message to Ali's quarters in the Abtah, summoning him from the arms of his wife to the presence of his master. When he reached the house under Es-Safa, in which Sa'îd Bey lived, he found the latter sitting in the mag'od smoking his shîsha. Greetings were exchanged, and Ali was invited to sit close to his master, in the raised window-place. Coffee having been served by a slave, they drank in silence. Presently the Bey enquired as to the price of camels. Ali informed him of the state of the market. Then Sa'îd Bey said, casually, "I flee from sudden death. Wilt thou accompany me?" Some sudden Ismailitish quarrel had blazed up between himself and his lord, the Sharîf of Mekka. "On my eye and head," replied Ali. "Whither?"

"To Egypt. To Stambûl. Our matter is in the Hand of God," replied the other.

An hour later they were on the El Medîna road, mounted on fleet deluls. They rode to El Medîna; for what reason is not clear, only that they wished to avoid Jidda. From the Prophet's city they rode to El Wejh, where they shipped on a dhow with their camels to El Cusayr. Off the latter port the dhow was sunk in a storm, and they were obliged to swim ashore, losing their animals. Having hired other mounts at El Cusayr, they rode to the Nile at Kena, where they boarded the train to Cairo. Eventually Constantinople was reached, and here Ali the 'Ataybi clothed himself

in an European suit of clothes and a tarbûsh. In the Othmânli capital, he fraternised with a "Greek Christian" who told him he had been a Muhammadan for forty years, but dared not openly profess Islâm for fear of being murdered by his relatives. He prayed and read the Korân in secret.

Come again to Arabia, Ali looked back upon his European excursion as some Arabian Night's tale—an exciting and bewildering experience, not altogether unpleasant, but better not repeated. During the Great War my companion was conscribed into the Hashimite forces,* and fought around El Medîna in the cavalry under the Sharîf Zayd, the youngest son of King Husayn.

Coming to present events, Ali said that when the Wahhâbîs entered Mekka he had encountered a number of his 'Ataybi kinsmen among the Ikhwân. These, in reply to his greetings, responded, "Peace be upon those who follow the Guidance.† Wilt thou come with us to the shaykh, or shall we slay thee here?" Ali preferred the shaykh, and was duly escorted to his presence by the scowling fanatics—lately homicides for the sake of loot; now reformed by Ibn Sa'ûd, and become homicides for the sake of what they imagine to be their religion, but what is in reality nothing more spiritual than the ambition of their able leader.

Ali, upon being catechised by the shaykh, was able to convince him that he was at heart a good Wahhâbî, in spite of having lived for so many years among the Mammonites of Mekka. In witness whereof he expressed

* Ali told me that King Husayn imprisoned a number of Mekkan conscientious objectors—men who would not fight against their co-religionists, the Turks.

† The Korân.

his intention of donning forthwith, and of wearing henceforth, a white turban-cloth over his head-kerchief in place of the hair-rope agâl. Thus would he proclaim to the world what a true "brother" he was.

This decision was highly commended by the shaykh, and Ali, having made this slight alteration in the fashion of his head-dress, had since enjoyed complete immunity from "brotherly" molestation. The one disadvantage of this arrangement was that he had several times been appealed to for assistance by his Wahhâbî brethren in the course of their skirmishes with the Mekkans. Perhaps a shopkeeper in the sûk asks more for an article than his Wahhâbî customer is prepared to pay; or he refuses to barter an article in exchange for some Bedouin treasure, worthless perhaps to a townsman; or a Wahhâbî sees in a shop a religious book containing matters of "innovation", and at once an argument ensues. Possibly blows are struck. "Come, O brothers!" yell the Wahhâbîs. "The Hand of God is with the company!" (i.e. Unity is strength); and soon the narrow street is filled with a heaving yelling mob. The shopkeepers hastily put up their shutters and retire to a place of safety; some of them join in the fight, for the Mekkans in their own city are no cowards, and they remember the time when any Wahhâbî who ventured into Mekka slunk along the street "like a dog," and dared not even resent a Mekkan's blow.

In face of one of these riots, Ali, with his Wahhâbî head-band, was sure to be claimed by the Nejders as a brother. Now, however, his badge has become so dirty and rope-like with use, that it would seem sufficiently ambiguous to excuse him from allegiance.

Ali was of a mild and liberal humour, and all fanaticism and suspicion was far from him. He seemed

to have absorbed some of that aristocratic magnanimity of the ashrâf, whom he frequently attended in the capacity of rafîg, or travelling companion, on desert journeys. He chose in all things the happy mean, so far as it lay within his power. Cheerful and peaceable, he left argument and quarrelling to others who frequently knew less than he did about the subject in hand. At night, however, he insisted on closing up our shutters, so that the room became filled with the smoke of our fire and of our cigarettes. He had a terrible fear of the devils which prowl in the dark, and these uncomfortable means were directed to keep them at bay. As soon as he slept, which he did the moment our conversation flagged, I would rise and open our shutters.

III

ET-TÂIF TO MEKKA

HAVING walked among the orchards of El Mathnâ, and about the town of Et-Tâif for some days; having feasted on pilau and bread and honey; and having enjoyed the experience of sleeping wrapped in three blankets, lent me by the sharîfs, I decided to return to Mekka. This time I would travel down the perpendicular face of Jebel Kara. Camels are unable to negotiate that steep descent, and mules or donkeys must therefore be employed. No mules remained in the deserted town of Et-Tâif, and I was consequently obliged to hire donkeys. The donkeys used on this route are small rat-like creatures—quite different from the fine Hasa and Egyptian donkeys of Mekka itself.

On the morning of our departure we rose before sunrise. A certain owner of donkeys, Sâlim by name, had promised by the life of his beard to bring three of those animals to the orchard before the rising of the sun. Presently the sun rose, and it became evident that Sâlim had forsworn himself on the life of his beard. Our breakfast was despatched, our baggage ready, and the sun was climbing higher and higher, and still our animals had not arrived. At last, some two hours after sunrise, Sâlim came sauntering up the wâdi, driving before him four saddled donkeys, one of which was laden with two petrol-tins full of samn. The whole party wore an air of complete unconcern. Sâlim smiled amiably as he came up to the orchard door. I returned

his greeting without enthusiasm, and asked him why he was late. He replied, "The cold was too intense for you, so I delayed until the sun mounted somewhat." I opened my mouth to speak, and was on the point of cursing Sâlim's father, when he himself began loudly to curse the father of one of his donkeys. Upon that it struck me what a scene of discord the world would become if everybody were to curse somebody else's father. I laughed; seeing which Sâlim laughed too, and his donkeys began contentedly to eat a species of barbed wire growing in the side of the wâdi.

"Shall I load the baggage, O my sir?" asked Sâlim.

"Do!" I replied cordially. "That is, when you have smelt the air and inspected the view."

"Up, O thieves!" cried he, striking his donkeys on the buttocks in smart succession with his stick; and driving them up to the steps, he began to assist Ali in arranging the baggage.

Eventually we moved off, marching on foot down the valley. I felt extreme compunction about riding on so small and thin an animal as was my donkey, and Ali of the camel-riding Bedouins had similar thoughts. But when you have a journey of fifty miles before you, through country as devoid of refreshment as a stone-quarry, with a sun like a blast-furnace, you will not long scruple over any aid to progress.

We passed northward, through Es-Salâma and Garwa, leaving Et-Tâif on our right; and then, reduced to mounting our donkeys, we turned north-westward and entered among the low hills which border the plain on that side. Two Mekkans, mounted on donkeys, here joined us. They were accompanied by their donkey-driver.

We now came into a maze of red and yellow sand-

stone hills through which we threaded our way for an hour, when we reached Bir el 'Askar—a well of sweet water surrounded by a few acacia trees. Several small parties of travellers—some mounted on donkeys, others on foot—passed by us at intervals, going in the direction of Et-Tâif. The day was Friday, and these peasants would pray the congregational prayer in the mosque of the town. The regular five daily prayers may be repeated on any clean spot of ground, whether in a town or in the wilderness. It is not essential to say them in a mosque, only it is more meritorious for a man to perform them in company with others than alone. The Friday prayer, however, may be held only in a town or village—a place of buildings—and the congregation must number at least forty persons. For this reason there is no Friday prayer among the Bedouins, unless they enter a town for the purpose of performing that rite. Thus did the Prophet seek to bring townsmen and Bedouins together that a better understanding might spring up between them. Nevertheless, townsmen and Bedouins continue to despise each other to the present day.

An hour after passing Bir el 'Askar we reached Jabâjib—a few poor fields of grain, watered from wells, lying in a hollow place like a great amphitheatre among the mountains. Having breasted the rise at the farther side of this basin, we commenced to descend a long declivity, at the bottom of which lay Wâdi Muhrim. We reached the latter place at about midday, and dismounted to rest and refresh ourselves.

Wâdi Muhrim is a cleft in the mountains, and the road by which we were travelling crossed it at right-angles. To ride down the rocky mountain-track from above into the bottom of this depression, is to step out

of desolation into tropical luxuriance. For in the narrow cleft of Wâdi Muhrim are green fields of grain and vegetables, interspersed with thick orchards of fruit trees. These gardens are watered by means of wells which yield a copious and constant supply of water. On the hillside, close above the orchards, stood the village of Muhrim, and isolated stone huts were scattered along the valley.

Wâdi Muhrim is the ihrâm station of this road, and accordingly it now became necessary for us to assume that uncomfortable dress. Ali and the donkey-drivers, being of Bedouin-kind in whom laxity in religious observances goes unremarked, chose to enter the sacred limits of the Haram wearing their ordinary clothes. The two Mekkans and myself, however, proceeded to make ourselves physically uncomfortable but morally content by bathing and assuming the ihrâm "for the 'Omra."* About his waist one of the Mekkans —a merchant—fastened a small leathern bag, which probably contained a considerable sum of money in gold. Having completed this change of attire we mounted again and rode forward up the opposite hillside.

Our way now lay up a narrow and rocky ravine, and the track was encumbered with rocks and boulders. As we advanced, the way became ever steeper until, coming to a pool of green and stagnant water, we dismounted and climbed on foot to the summit of the mountain. From the pool the track mounted upwards in a zig-zag form, turning now to left and then to right in a series of acute-angled bends. So broken was the mountain with projecting rocks that, looking up its nearly perpendicular side, one could see no sign of the

* The ihrâm is always put on with the "intention" of performing either the Hajj or the 'Omra.

track from below. This mountain is composed of red sandstone, and it is known as Walad Kara.

Among the boulders of Walad Kara, and in the trench-like bends of the track in which we were ascending, the Sharîf Ali and his followers had taken up their position after fleeing before the Wahhâbîs from Et-Tâif. Those of them who rode mules or donkeys drove their animals up with them, and all prepared to make a stand. On the approach of the Wahhâbîs, however, the Hashimites again took to flight, and this time they did not stop until they reached Mekka. The Nejders were unable to advance beyond this point, as no camel can climb the mountain-side. They ultimately reached Mekka by the route of the Wâdi el Yemânîya.

We were occupied for more than an hour in ascending Walad Kara. I had purposely kept in the rear and allowed the two Mekkans to precede me, so that I might surreptitiously cover my head from the blinding sunfire. Ali and the donkey-drivers were fully clothed, and in any case such easy-going rascals take little account of religious observances. The two Mekkans were of a different temper. One of these was a merchant and the other was a schoolmaster, and both were punctilious as to prayers and other matters of ritual. Unfortunately, I had omitted to bring an umbrella with me when leaving Mekka, and now, dressed only in my two towels and my sandals, I was like to have my brains boiled away to nothing by the time I reached the summit of the mountain. I adjusted the upper garment of the ihrâm so that it covered my head and shoulders completely; and continued plodding on my way upward. If the Mekkans should have anything to say concerning my back-sliding I would tell them

that I intended to sacrifice a sheep as an alms in Mekka, and all would be well. But if I went unobserved so much the better. Presently, however, the schoolmaster drew his own ihrâm over his head. He, too, valued his brains more than the chance of martyrdom. The good merchant allowed the sun to have its way with his shaven pate to the end. We climbed up the mountain as flies might crawl up the side of a house, straining at last safely over the edge to the top.

Now, indeed, we were come to upland places. Turning at the summit, we looked back over the crests of the intervening mountains, and saw Et-Tâif in the far distance, lying in the midst of the plain. Nearer, almost under our feet, though far below, lay the rock-bound oasis of Wâdi Muhrim. A cool wind from the north-west blew about us, and the sun had ceased to burn, but only shone gloriously.

Our way led over the sandy plateau of the mountain-top, which was dotted with detached fields of sparse grain and birsîm. All the country about us was of a rich ruddy hue—something between pink and orange and red. Two miles in front of us, to north-eastward of the edge of Walad Kara, rose a beautiful isolated conical peak of red sandstone, perhaps a thousand feet in height. It is called Jebel en-Namûr. At its foot, and on the lowest slopes of its southern side, certain square shapes of the same red stone slowly took form and stood out as we approached. These cubes gave to the lower slope of the hillside a curious terraced appearance, but so perfectly did their colour match that of the hill under which they stood, that at first sight only those whose background was the sky could be distinguished. Those which were backed by the red hillside were quite invisible at the distance of a mile.

These shapes were the houses of the village of Dâr el Hamrâ.

Arrived at the village, we crossed a little water channel, and passing by a small patch of green fields and gardens—strangely beautiful in the ruddy wilderness—we skirted the western side of the peak and marched onward into the open plain of El Hada.

We were now at an altitude of more than six thousand feet above sea-level, and the wind blew chilly in spite of the strong sunshine. The geological nature of the country changed as we advanced—the red sandstone giving place to grey granite. Large and small boulders of this stone lay strewn over the plain, and the low walls which protected the scattered fields of grain and vegetables among which we were now come, were built of rough pieces of the same stone piled insecurely one upon another. Dispersed widely about the plain was a number of stone huts belonging to the Hudhayl peasants. At different points along the track were several huts of a larger type. These were coffee-houses, in which the many travellers who pass on this road may procure refreshment and shelter. Many of the Mekkans make summer excursions to this place, and remain lodged in the coffee-houses for a week or two at a time. Here they amuse themselves with music and talk.

All about the plain, and particularly on its eastern side, were small orchards of peach, almond, pomegranate, apple, apricot, fig, and sidr trees, and also grape vines. Some half a score of dwellings worthy the name of houses lay among the orchards on the eastern side of the plain. These houses belong to Mekkan families. The most conspicuous among them was a large two-storeyed house belonging to the Shaybi. The

whole of this district is known as El Hada. It is much colder than Et-Tâif, and is also far more inspiring, for besides the beauty of vegetation it possesses grandeur of aspect. On the north-western edge of the plain a great black peak rises to a height of quite 2,000 feet, and its summit cannot be less than 8,000 feet above sea-level; possibly it is nearer 9,000 feet.

We rode on among the fields and boulders until we came, soon after noon, to a coffee-house with a walled yard at one side of it. This we entered, and having surrendered our donkeys to Sâlim, Ali and I seated ourselves on a raised mud bench, protected by a roof of rude branches which extended along one side of the yard. Having kindled a fire with the assistance of the coffee-house keeper, of whom we borrowed a clay coffee-pot and an iron cauldron, we prepared our midday meal. Water was here in abundance, as there are several springs which rise in the mountains at the edge of the plain and flow down in little rippling streams among the orchards. Sâlim attended to his donkeys and carefully inspected his two petrol-tins of melted butter, and then joined us with hungry looks. The two Mekkans, seeing us preparing food, forbore to open their own provision bags, but seated themselves near us and waited to be bidden to partake of our repast, offering, meanwhile, much valuable advice on the subject of cookery. Prayers were postponed until el'asr, as we intended to avail ourselves of the traveller's privilege of saying two prayers together. Our talk centred upon the capture of Et-Tâif, and my companions enumerated the names of some of the slain—among them being the Câdi of the city and several other religious shaykhs of high repute and station, and also the Shaybi's son, Hasan. That which my com-

panions seemed to find most bitter was the stealing of the inhabitants' slaves. The merchant spoke of a beautiful Circassian slave-girl who, rather than submit to the brutal and lascivious embraces of her Bedouin captor, had stolen from his tent at night in a madness of horror and thrown herself headlong down a precipice on the slope of Jebel Barad.

At mid-afternoon we mounted and rode forward for half an hour over a grassy plain broken here and there by granite rocks. At a short distance before the edge of the precipice down which we were now to travel, Ali and I dismounted, and Sâlim took charge of our donkeys. There are two ways by which the traveller may descend Jebel Kara. The old route is steep and slippery, and donkeys are unable to carry a rider down it. Only the best mules can safely attempt such a feat. Sâlim would drive his four donkeys down by that way, and the two Mekkans with their donkey-driver would accompany him.

The second route lies to the right hand, or eastward, of this. It was constructed in recent years by the Turks. It was intended for the passage of camels, and droves of these animals, without burdens, have made the ascent. The track is so steep, however, that they cannot descend by it, and are therefore obliged to return to Mekka by way of Et-Tâif and the Wâdi Yemânîya. At the time of which I write, this pass was broken down in several places, and I was informed that no camel had made the ascent for several months. The work of construction appears to have been still uncompleted when the Turkish rule in the Hijâz came to an end (1916). The track describes a series of acute-angled bends connecting straight paths which have been blasted and hewn in the granite of the mountain-

side horizontally, one below another, from top to bottom. In some parts a parapet has been constructed on the side towards the precipice, while at other points there is no such protection. Parts of the track are so steep that steps have been hewn in the rock to facilitate passage, and in several places the foothold is so precarious as to be dangerous even to a man on foot. By this route I had decided to negotiate the descent.

After parting from Sâlim, we walked forward over the grassy plain towards the crest-edge of Jebel Kara. Beyond it, all was an open void. On either side of the path a growth of small vegetation grew so thickly among the scattered rocks as to conceal the ground completely. Now we were approaching the imminent edge of the lofty plateau. The ground rose gently, as though to accentuate the utter immensity of its impending descent. In another moment I stood wonder-struck on a flat-topped projecting buttress, as it were upon the very prow-point of some great ship at sea, and looked down upon the yellow-scarred petrified ocean of the Tihâma, a thousand fathoms beneath my feet. To westward the mountain-edge fell away in a great curve, and then came forward again five miles away. In the centre of that curve was the beginning of the mule-track which descended in the ravine to the plain; while, somewhat to westward, a torn and broken white ribbon hung from crest to foot of the mountain —caught among the stark rocks which projected from its side. This was a flowing stream of cascades and waterfalls, fed by a spring at the mountain-top. To the right hand, the ground also receded from the projecting point on which I stood; and then, coming forward again, far away to eastward, it stretched a mighty bastion into the northern distance. The tawny side of

that great mountain-wall was scarred with a hundred black ravines of a terrible grimness. Neither in the Alps nor in the ranked volcanoes of Java had I seen such grim and monstrous majesty as this.

On the dusky plain far below, stretched the winding broken chains of the Tihâma mountains, and beyond these, to westward, lay the open yellow plain. From among the shadows which obscured its farthest edges came an intermittent glitter—the sunlit waters of the Red Sea, eighty miles away.

With a last look at the green edge of the plateau, I turned to make the descent. Ali cast anxious glances at the beetling mountain-side above and about us, as we made our way down the zig-zag track. "These Hudhayl are dogs," he said. "They obstruct the way, and steal the traveller's goods." When I would have stayed on some jutting ledge to look at the wonderful scene, he bade me not to loiter. "They will hit you with lead, Shaykh Ahmad!" said he. "Though you see nothing of them." Frequently he prayed, "O Lord! give me Thy covering!" His mind was doubly uneasy for my sake—his rafîk.

For three hours we walked and ran like goats down and along the tracks cut in the mountain-side. At last we reached the point at which our way joined the mule-path; and here, under a green sidr tree, we found Sâlim and the Mekkans waiting with the donkeys. The mule-path by which they had come runs straight down the ravine, with very little turning aside for easy gradients, and so is very much shorter and considerably steeper than the new road, although the latter is cut in a steeper side of the mountain.

We now crossed over the brook which descended from the mountain-top, and pursued our way among

the rocks and stones of its left bank. This rippling stream of fresh water was a blessed sight in the stony wilderness. At intervals, small acacia and sidr trees grew along its banks, while at a little distance crooked and lifeless thorn bushes stood like skeletons among the stones. After sunset we stumbled into a dim village of scattered stone hovels—El Kurr.

At El Kurr the ravine is nearly a mile wide; and dotted over the basin, but chiefly among the rocks of its western slopes, are the stone huts of the villagers. These huts are, for the most part, of a single chamber, and they have no doors to their entrances nor any windows. The inhabitants are abjectly poor, and the furniture within one of these dwellings consists of nothing more than an iron pot for cooking food, a clay coffee-pot, a hair-cloth or leather sack, and a heap of rags. A few stony fields of sparse grain lay in the hollow of the basin, and some of the starveling peasants shared their huts with a goat or two and some scraggy chickens.

The coffee-house was also a hut of a single chamber, but it was distinguished from most of the other dwellings by a piece of hair-cloth hung as a curtain in the doorway. Outside this hut we placed our baggage on a space of swept ground. It was now quite dark, and having prayed and eaten, we entered the hut to sleep—taking the remains of our fire with us. But soon the smoke drove me out again from among my snoring bed-fellows, and I tried to make myself comfortable on the ground. For a long time I lay awake, cold and miserable in my ihrâm, under the stars. I had wrapped my hair-cloth mantle and my blanket about me, although it is forbidden to the muhrim to cover himself with anything but his two pieces of seamless material, by day or by night. The rough hair-cloth

against my bare legs was like a penitent's hair shirt. For a pillow I was using our provision sack. This contained dates, rice, and stale bread. Now I heard padding footsteps about my head, and the snuffling of inquisitive noses. Without moving away I stealthily gathered handfuls of stones from the ground about me, and then rising up suddenly I flung a sustained volley at the mongrel hounds which prowled about my pillow. They did not bark, but one which was struck by a stone gave a frightened yelp, and they ran silently away into the night.

At last I fell asleep, and then . . . I was awake. I thought I had hardly slept for ten minutes, but surely I heard fresh sounds. Yet now fully awake I could hear nothing; nor could I see anything moving.

Again I dozed, and fell asleep. . . . Suddenly, a shriek or cry! . . . I was awake . . . I was asleep . . . I was awake! In the blackness above and behind me, an agonised voice said hoarsely, "Yâ Rasûl . . .!" "O Prophet . . .!" It sounded like the supplication of a dying man. Somebody issued from the inn-keeper's hut, and from the coffee-house itself came the Mekkan schoolmaster, followed by Ali. The latter cried out anxiously: "Ahmad! Nothing has happened to you?" I assured him that all was well with me, and we pressed forward to find out what was the matter. We climbed up some rude steps of piled stones, and as we came out on an upper terrace, a voice in the darkness in front of us said in horror-struck tones: "Verily we belong to God, and unto Him we shall surely return!" The Mekkan merchant who had travelled in our company from Et-Tâif lay dead at the inn-keeper's feet. In the faint starlight I could see that the left side of his neck was black with blood, and a great dark patch was

visible on the right side of his bare chest. The upper garment of his ihrâm was covered with large dark stains. His leathern money-bag was no longer attached to his waist. As I bent down to feel his pulse to make sure that life was extinct, a loud outcry arose in the darkness behind us. The voice of Sâlim came from the lower terrace, indignantly bewailing fresh misfortune. He had placed his two petrol-tins of samn beside his donkey-saddles, outside the hut, and now they had vanished.

Dawn was breaking over the eastern hillside, and Ali began to kindle our fire. The shaykh of the village, who had been summoned to the coffee-house, regarded the murder with fortitude, not to say indifference. At last, somewhat impressed by our insistence on the punishment which would be meted out to his wretched village by Ibn Sa'ûd if the culprit were not produced, he rose with a portentous air, and accompanied by a score of the villagers, he made a house to house search for the two tins of samn!

The schoolmaster, having for some time debated with ourselves and Sâlim as to the possibility of transporting the merchant's body to Mekka for burial in the Maala, finally decided to bury him where we were, on account of the difficulty of carrying him so far. He was therefore buried as a martyr, in his ihrâm and without ablution, the schoolmaster being of the opinion that this was the correct procedure. As to how the unfortunate man came to meet his death, we supposed that he had gone groping about in the darkness to find a place in which to relieve himself, and had been set upon by thieves.

The sun was some two hours high when we left that ill-fated place. The saddened but garrulous school-

master would lodge information at Mekka concerning the murder of his companion; and Sâlim would do likewise in respect of his samn. They were careful to enquire where Ali and I might be found in the Holy City, that they might call upon us, if necessary, to give our evidence. I never heard anything more of the matter.

Still descending a gradual incline, we picked our way among the stones of the ravine for over half an hour, when we reached level ground in the sandy valley known as Ras el Kharîg. After riding between high mountain walls for an hour, we came to the village of Shaddâd—a small collection of rush and stone huts on the plain. Several of these huts were open to travellers, while others were occupied by the villagers and their families. All who alight may rest in the huts, and prepare their food. A finjân of coffee is handed to each traveller. The chief man in this poverty-stricken place sells, as though they were things of fabulous value, a poor trash of dry crumbling tobacco, dirty sugar, green coffee berries, and ancient tea dust.

With hearty shouts and greetings our donkey-drivers ride into the open space between the circle of huts. We are now in the oppressive Tihâma, and exhausted humanity constantly craves rest and refreshment. "Es-salâm, 'alaykum, yâ Mahmûd! Kayf anta?" "Peace upon thee, Mahmûd. How art thou? How is thy state? Art thou well?" While Sâlim saluted the keeper of the poor caravanserai, we crawled inside to hide ourselves from the sun. So low are the roofs of these rude tents of dead branches and dry camel grass, that a man is unable to stand upright. "Welcome!" says the coffee-house keeper. "And upon thee be peace and the mercy of God! How is thy state? We will give

thee coffee. Tightened you from El Kurr? You descended the mountain yesterday? That is known! Welcome! What news from Et-Tâif? . . ."

Were it not for the profit derived from passing travellers, no one would dwell in these sterile sun-parched valleys. Indeed, but for the Korânic ordinance of the Pilgrimage, the valley of Mekka itself would be uninhabited, and known only to the passing nomad for the water of that strange never-failing well of Zemzem.

Having refreshed ourselves and rested until the hour of el 'asr, we again mounted our donkeys and rode forward. Like ants we crawled across the hot sand. On either side the mountains towered up and imprisoned us without hope of escape, save by toiling along the low earth through tortuous sun-stricken ways. Near behind us, to the south-east, rose the cyclopean wall of Kara, its black crests over-topping the world. At our feet tufts of spiny grass, of an unholy grey-green hue, crouched closely in the sand by the wayside. As we passed, scaly reptiles of lizard form, between one and two feet in length, ran out and scurried across the burning plain. From among the shadows, horned adders of a leprous yellow-greyness slithered wriggling away. A monstrous solitary bird wheeled in vast ceaseless circles in the blinding sunlight far above us. In the mountains on either hand great clefts appeared at intervals, leading away into unknown sterile places. Over this mighty desolation lay a primeval stillness. If one of my companions spoke, no sooner had the words left his lips than the silence closed upon the futile sound so completely that it seemed as though he had never spoken nor would ever speak again. Occasionally a sun-blackened nomad on his gaunt camel

rode by us at a few yards distance, but his passing made no sound.

We rode into a greater sayl-bed—Wâdi-n Nu'mân—a dry watercourse in the centre of the mile-wide plain of the valley bottom. Further on, we came to a line of strongly-built circular erections, like stone well-parapets, which extended westward from a point at the right-hand (northern) side of the valley. These marked the course of the subterranean aqueduct of 'Ayn Zubayda, which has its beginning at the foot of the mountain at that point. The source of the water is a spring called 'Ayn Honayn, situated among the mountains at a distance of two hours' journey from the Wâdi Nu'mân. Several smaller springs are also led to this aqueduct, and a copious supply of excellent water is thus carried some twenty miles to Mekka. The work, which represents no small feat of engineering, is named after the Lady Zubayda, wife of the Abbasside Caliph Harûn Er-Rashîd, who defrayed the expense of its construction.

The dwellers in this terrible region are of the tribe of Curaysh—that strange confraternity which numbers among its families the noblest of the Arabs and also the vilest. Among them, said Ali, are the Beni Da'd and the Beni Fahm, "who know not the rites of their religion, and many of them have never seen the Haram of Mekka in all their lives." Relating some of the details of their hard stressful existence, he told me of their gruesome method of circumcision. Among them, said he, this rite is deferred until the subject reaches the age of puberty. Before he reaches that age, the youth's parents have already arranged his marriage contract. On the day appointed, the elders of the two families assemble for the purpose of witnessing the

performance of the Semitic rite. The youth's affianced bride is also present. He who is to perform the surgery, now commences his ghastly operation: for among these spartan wretches, the skin of the whole belly, from immediately below the navel, is removed, as is also that of the front and inner side of the thighs for half way to the knees, and the whole of the skin of the male organ. While the operation is being performed the youth stands up to his full height, with feet firmly planted, and "with a mighty joy," said Ali, shouts at the top of his voice his own name and the names of his ancestors, brandishing a long dagger which he holds in his hand. His affianced bride sits before him, helping him to fortitude with zaghrata* and beat of drum. Should the youth quail or whimper in the agony of this barbarous courtship, it is a great disgrace to him, and his lady is entitled to refuse to marry him. Ali said that the greater number of them die of this circumcision. Other tribes in this region whose members practice this rite are the Kabâkab and the Talahâ.

At sunset we reached a point at which the Wâdi Nu'mân turned southward. Here there was a ramshackle caravanserai, known as the 'Arafa Coffee-house; and to westward a gap in the mountains disclosed the 'Arafa plain. Riding up to a raised earthen platform beside the stone-built coffee-hut, we unloaded our beasts, performed ablutions, prayed, and prepared our supper—of tea, stale bread, goat-milk cheese, and dates. We sat talking for a brief space after our meal, and then, having prayed the 'eshâ prayer,

* The zaghrata cry is produced by moving the tongue quickly from side to side in the mouth, while from the throat a high-pitched squealing cry is emitted. The lips are held as in whistling, and the sound of the zaghrata is a shrill and prolonged trilling.

we lay down on the earthen platform to sleep. "We were six persons last night," said the schoolmaster in a resigned tone of voice, as he rose to enter the hut, "and now we are but five." The ihrâmed man could not sleep uncovered in the cold night air. Pious exclamations were murmured sleepily at his remark. He disappeared within the hut. The tired donkeys quietly munched their dry grass . . . a faint distant cry of a jackal . . .

A noise of tin cans came dimly to my understanding, and the next moment I was wide awake in the early dawn. We rose and broke our fast, and then rode forward into the plain of 'Arafa. I told Ali that I wished to pray two prostrations in every mosque between 'Arafa and Mekka. Accordingly, we turned our animals' heads towards Jebel er-Rahma. The schoolmaster and his donkey-driver left us, and struck across the plain on the direct road to the Holy City. Arrived at the Mount of Mercy, I dismounted from my beast and climbed the hill in order to explore it thoroughly. This accomplished, we rode across the plain, westward, to the Mosque of Nimra, which I found occupied by a flock of goats. We then proceeded through the valley El Mazamayn to Muzdalfa, where we again dismounted to visit the mosque. Marching on to Mina, we found the Mosque of El Khayf closed and locked. It is opened only at the Feast of Sacrifices.

The road between 'Arafa and Mekka is marked by a score of narrow parallel tracks in the stony bottoms of the valleys. These are made by the great concourse of beasts which pass this way every year, carrying their thousands of pilgrims. All this long way, now as silent as the grave, had been teeming with life when I had last seen it. Now on Jebel er-Rahma and the plain of

'Arafa there was no sign of that mighty concourse of hâjjis from every quarter of the world. Only the little heaps of stones beneath which lie the bones of dead hâjjis, and the bleached and broken skeletons of sacrificed animals, told of the great departed host. Occasionally a string of camels, laden with "crosses" of twisted desert grass, went by us, but that was all. I saw no sign of the apes which, the Mekkans say, infest these grim black mountains.

Riding down the long Mina street, we passed the three stone "devils" and then descended the narrow rocky way into the valley of El Abtah. Before us lay the familiar valley, revealing, with every fresh turn, some old outlying house or mosque or well of the Sacred City's eastern districts. It was nearly noon as we rode down El Gashâshîya towards the Haram, making our way to Abdurrahmân's house. Arrived at last in the narrow lane, I flung myself from my donkey and passed into the cool relief of the dark entrance-hall. I was blistered and blackened by sun and dirt. I had for days past been alternately burnt and chilled, and I was half-starved. I crawled up the dark stairway to my room, where Abdurrahmân met me with the cordiality of an old friend. "Praise to God for your safe return!" said he. "Will you drink coffee or tea? . . . And then we will dine; and you can perform the towâf and the 'running' after sunset, and so free yourself of the ihrâm."

IV

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE MEKKANS

BY the Mekkans, women are most truly esteemed for their ability to bear children, especially male children, and for their success in rearing their offspring safely to the age of puberty. A barren woman, no matter what other excellent attributes or housewifely accomplishments she may possess, seldom retains her husband's affection for any length of time.

The confinement of Mekkan women is attended by several of her female relatives and friends. Usually one of these possesses the necessary knowledge of such matters, but frequently a professional midwife is engaged. The father, sitting anxiously in his mag'od below, or on the steps outside the harîm quarters, waits, with murmured prayers, to hear the result of the occasion. In the event of the infant being a boy, he controls his delight within the bounds imposed by decorum, and utters praise to God. If the newcomer happens to be a girl, his delight is usually somewhat more easy to control, and his praises may be interspersed with the resigned remark: "It is the will of God."

Before the inception of Islâm, the barbarous custom of burying their female children alive was practised in many of the Arab tribes. Generally speaking, the reason was poverty. Male infants were potential warriors—raiders and plunderers for the benefit of the family or the tribe. Female children, like male children,

had to be fed and clothed until they reached the age of puberty; but far from then becoming, like their brothers, a material asset to the tribe, they might prove a handicap. Unless the girl could be sufficiently dowered by her father, she might remain unmarried, and be in danger of contracting a dishonourable connection. Presumably these barbarians decided that by burying the unfortunate child alive they were not actually responsible for her death, since she did not yield up the ghost while in their hands. Female infanticide, from long custom, therefore, had lost whatever savour of crime may once have attached to it, until Muhammad forbade it and placed it in its true category. Also, by transferring from the bride to the bridegroom the obligation of providing the dowry, he rendered void the principal reason for female infanticide.

A week after the birth of a child, the Mekkan father invites a number of his and his wife's relatives to the ceremony of naming the infant, usually immediately after sunset. The women visitors are entertained upstairs in the harîm, while the men occupy a lower room. One such entertainment to which I was invited occurred at the house of one Mahmûd the Syrian. His male guests being assembled, Mahmûd ascended to the harîm, where he received the infant from one of the women. The little creature reposed on an elaborately embroidered and bespangled cushion of coloured plush, and was himself arrayed in satin finery, including a gaudy little bonnet. His head rested on a tiny pillow, similar in material and decoration to the cushion. Over all was spread a fine gauze veil, heavily bespangled. Re-entering the reception room, Mahmûd carefully deposited his burden on the floor in the midst

of his guests. As he did so, we exclaimed, "God's will be done!" and "Blessed be God!" More direct expressions of admiration would not merely be considered rude, but would be positively dangerous, as being likely to attract the malignant attention of the devils to the new-born child.

The father next carefully arranged the cushion in such a way that the infant's head pointed towards the Kibla, its feet being in the opposite direction. This matter having been meticulously attended to, he knelt down and said: "I take refuge in God from Satan, the accursed." Immediately after this he bent over the child's head, and placing his mouth close to its right ear repeated the adân three times. The igâma, which is very similar to the adân, was then repeated three times into the left ear. After this, Mahmûd said in a distinct tone: "I name thee Muhammad Sâlih."

This ceremony formally makes the child a Muslim, and the devils have then no power to pervert it.

As Mahmûd named his child, we at once repeated the name with signs of pleasure, adding "God bless thee." Everybody present then quietly placed a small piece of money beneath the little pillow, and somebody proceeded to knock with an iron pestle upon a brass mortar. The latter act was a signal to the women waiting upstairs, and informed them that the child's name had been pronounced. It was immediately acknowledged from the harîm by a chorus of joyful cries, known, in the singular, as zaghrata (pl. zaghârît).

In the midst of this enthusiastic uproar, Mahmûd gathered up the infant on the cushion, and after those present had kissed it on the cheek, he carried it back to the harîm. Thence he and his slave descended after

a few moments, bearing trays laden with dishes of food. Having eaten, the guests dispersed.

Sometimes the father will ask a shaykh of pious renown to perform the ceremony of naming his son, and on such occasions the shaykh usually opens the proceedings by reciting a long chant, entitled "The Nativity of the Prophet."

On the fortieth day subsequent to its birth, the infant is taken to the Haram and placed for a moment upon the threshold of the Kaaba, while a shaykh makes supplication to God for its future well-being. The Mekkans say that in the case of no male child born in their city, which survives until the fortieth day of its age, is this ceremony ever omitted.

By Islamic law a mother is obliged to give suck to her child for two full years, but this period may be shortened, with the father's consent. Some of the wealthy employ foster-mothers to nurse their babies, and many of the male children of the Ashrâf are handed over to Bedouin foster-mothers among the desert tribes about Et-Tâif. Here they live the hard life of the Bedouins, and grow up possessed of the fearless and independent spirit of the desert men. They also acquire the idiomatic speech and correct pronunciation which are best learnt in the hair-tents of the open wilderness; and besides learning the customs and much of the lore of the desert, they keep alive, by means of foster-kinship, those tribal connections which may be of use to them in after life, when they attain to positions of power or are threatened with that danger to their lives which, in the fickle society of Arabia, may come to any prominent man at any moment.

Mekkan children, up to the age of four years, seldom

wear any clothes at all when indoors, save in the coldest season of the year. Out of doors, the boys wear smocks, turbans, and sandals, and sometimes a little jacket over the smock. Children of the lower classes play in the lanes, naked, or dressed in nothing but the smock—the shaven heads of the little boys, and the matted hair of the little girls, being unprotected from the sun. Among the upper classes, the children seldom leave their houses until they are old enough to go to school. Until that time they are perpetually with the women, and as the latter almost never go out, the children share the same sedentary existence. Occasionally, on Thursday evenings, parties of women from good harîms may be seen in the Mosque, and at such times they are frequently accompanied by their children—the little girls of five years or more being closely veiled, like their mothers.

At the age of five years, it is usual for a boy to be sent to the Korân school. By that time his father will have taught him to repeat the Confession of Faith, and possibly the Fâtiha also. At the school, he is first taught the letters of the alphabet, and is then gradually advanced until he can read aloud parts of the Korân, without knowing its meaning. Instead of a slate, the pupil has a board of whitened wood, a foot long by nine inches broad, on which he writes in ink by the aid of a reed pen. Having finished his lesson, he cleans the board by means of water and a sponge, or rag.

The Korân schools in Mekka are very numerous, and there are three colleges of a more advanced type. As most of the Mekkans enjoy many months of leisure each year, the lessons given in these schools are usually well attended, as are also the lectures on advanced religious subjects, which are delivered by shaykhs in

the cloisters of the Great Mosque. Since the time of which I write, Ibn Sa'ûd has established in Mekka a theological college, similar to El Azhar in Cairo, though smaller.

The teaching in these schools is concerned almost exclusively with religious subjects, and in general the lessons are straitly arranged to conform to the puritanical tenets of the Wahhâbîs. All books imported from Egypt and elsewhere are perused by persons appointed by the government, before being surrendered to the booksellers to whom they have been consigned. Many books are said to have been banned.

In religious subjects, and even in some others, such as history and geography, the Mekkans, although scarcely an enlightened community, are better instructed than the Egyptians, with the exception of those who have studied in El Azhar, on the one hand, or in the secondary schools, on the other. The Mekkans dabble in these matters for eight or nine months of the year; but as soon as the pilgrims begin to arrive in considerable numbers, the pursuit of learning is dropped, and everybody, from the highest to the lowest, the oldest to the youngest, attends to business. Some hire out houses, camels, shugdufs or tents; some become shopkeepers and rent the little shops in the markets, which have lain empty for many months; the mutawwifs refresh their memories of the supplications used in the Hajj; dervishes and poor foreign students now become errand boys or water-carriers; little urchins insist on doing necessary or unnecessary services for the helpless hâjjis, and accept their reward with dignity or scurrility according to its amount.

When the hâjjis leave Mekka, then the Mekkans turn their thoughts to pleasure and laziness, each

among his own coterie. Then they are impatient of the intrusion of foreigners in their midst, unless the foreigner conforms closely to their manners. It is at this season that a stranger who would live as an intimate among them has to fear making himself conspicuous by exhibiting strange manners and ignorance of Muslim customs.

At the age of six or seven years, the boys, having learnt to pray correctly, to recite parts of the Korân, and to answer a simple catechism, are circumcised. In the original Mekkan custom, this is an occasion for some display and merry-making, but under the Wahhâbî regime it is done more quietly. Female circumcision is also practised.

In many of the more purely Arabian families, it is the custom to make incisions in the skin of the faces of male children. These are usually three in number across each cheek-bone, and the resulting scars are some two or three inches in length.

Mekkan children are generally very respectful and submissive to their parents and elders, though some of the little boys of the lower classes are exceedingly rebellious towards their mothers. Well-dressed children whom I did not know, have sometimes kissed my hand in the streets. Many men of the mutawwif class make use of the most gross and obscene language, even in the presence of their tiny children, and it is not surprising, therefore, that the latter quickly acquire the habit.

I was frequently visited by the two children of a neighbour; a little girl of four years or so, named Ayesha, and her brother Muhammad, a boy of five. One day I heard excited cries on the stairs outside my door, accompanied by the rapid padding noise of little

hurrying bare feet. The next moment Ayesha fell over the threshold, with Muhammad on top of her, hitting lustily. I separated the combatants, and Muhammad, catching sight of a packet of Turkish delight which lay on a cushion, ceased to blaspheme. I allowed him to take a piece of the sweetmeat, and then ordered him off the premises. His mouth being full, he went quietly. By that time Ayesha had dried her tears, or rather had distributed their moisture more evenly over her little smudgy face.

"Give the red piece!" she said, coaxingly, pointing to it with her finger and thumb. I handed her a pink piece of the sugar-coated sweetmeat. The little yellow-brown fingers closed around the misty opaque mass, and then she held it up for my inspection—an enormous pink pearl, in a five-pointed golden setting.

"Women," I said, "are oppressed in Mekka."

"Ana mozlûma," said she. "I am oppressed, Hâjj Ahmad."

"You must not fight with Muhammad," I said severely.

"The dog!" she said, her pretty red mouth dropping sugar.

"But," I said, "if Muhammad is a dog, and you are his sister, then you will be what?"

"He is not a dog," said she, mumbling and ignoring my logic. "The dog is better than he. That one is a pig! an (untranslatable)! a son of adultery!"

Five minutes later, still munching delectably, she left me "in the keeping of God."

Among the population of Mekka as a whole, however, foul language is heard far less frequently than it is among the Egyptians.

While still a boy, the Mekkan assumes those traits of

affability and pride, courage and meanness, prodigality and greed, which are the outstanding features of his character. Before strangers or chance acquaintances he displays a kind and dignified bearing, which, though often merely assumed, is extremely effective. He delights in brilliantly coloured dress, in rich carpets and gaudy hanging lamps for his house, and in as numerous harîm as his means will allow, even though its members be mutually antagonistic.

The number of free-women in Mekka is not actually abundant, and in consequence of this the amount of the dowries paid is rather high. Many Mekkans, whose means are not ample, do not marry until they are twenty-five years of age, or even older. In such cases, however, they do not hesitate to invest the greater part of their capital in the purchase of a female slave. In the event of necessity arising, they may sometimes hire these slaves out as cooks, nurses, or housemaids, to the hâjjis, and themselves receive their wages. Or they will sell them again at need. Where there is no financial impediment, the Mekkans usually marry before the age of twenty.

The mother, or other female relative of a youth, having decided upon a girl whom she considers suitable to be his wife, proceeds, with his consent, to propose the matter to the girl's parents or guardians, either in person or through an agent. This is a matter of some delicacy, and skill is also required in the negotiations concerning the amount of the dowry. This having been agreed upon, a day is appointed for promulgating the marriage contract. On that day a feast is prepared in the house of the bride's parents, to which the bridegroom and his friends are invited. A shaykh is usually present, and he instructs the parties in the correct

procedure. The number of witnesses required by law is two, but in the event of the bride being a virgin, there is usually a considerable gathering present. All being assembled and seated, the girl's father, or guardian, takes the bridegroom's right hand in his, and says to him: "I give you my daughter (or my ward) Fâtma (or whatever her name may be) in marriage for a dowry of twenty guineas (or as the case may be)." The bridegroom replies, accepting the contract and calling upon those present to bear witness to the fact. This being completed, the parties are husband and wife. Neither the bride nor any other woman is present, and no written contract is executed. It is usual for the parents to ask the girl's consent in private. She does not see the man until the night on which the marriage is consummated, unless she happens to have caught accidental glimpses of him as he passes by in the street, beneath her window. The bridegroom is equally uninformed as to the personal appearance of his bride, for his mother, though almost certainly a woman of imagination, would doubtless not be possessed of sufficient mental balance to describe her faithfully.

Consummation usually takes place about a month after the contract is made. The period varies, however, and in the case of the marriage of children by their parents, consummation naturally takes place years afterwards.

On the arrival of the appointed evening, the husband goes to see his bride at her parent's house. On this occasion he is led into her room by old women, and left alone with her for a few moments. He unveils her face, and hands her a piece of money. I am told that this is usually a very solemn occasion, unless the couple happen to have known each other well in childhood.

In the latter happy circumstance, the youth usually makes the girl blush, even if he does not make her smile. The time at his disposal, however, is short, and should he delay, the old women who have let him into the room will joyfully exercise their right to turn him out again. On the same night, the bride is escorted by her relatives to her husband's house. This is done very quietly in Mekka, almost in secrecy; but on the following evening the husband gives a great feast at his house to all his relatives by marriage, as well as to his blood relatives. To such festivities, women as well as men are invited; but the former are entertained in the harîm quarters at the top of the house, while the men are accommodated in the mag'od or other rooms on the ground floor. If necessary, the lower rooms of a neighbour's house are borrowed for the accommodation of the surplus guests, or mats and carpets are spread in the street outside. The feast brings the marriage festivities to an end.

The Mekkans have few amusements, and they indulge in no form of out-of-door sport, unless it be an impromptu race or wrestling match on the occasion of an excursion. Singing songs, and playing on the lute, the reed pipe and the drum, either in their houses or in the open-air coffee-houses in the environs of the city, are their chief forms of relaxation. The making of music, however, is discouraged by the Wahhâbîs.

The club of the Mekkans is the great quadrangle of the Haram. Here friends meet by accident or appointment, sit and talk of religious or secular matters, read, sleep, perform the towâf in company, have their letters written (those of them who are illiterate) by the public writers who sit near Bâb es-Salâm, or feed the sacred pigeons.

These pigeons are of a pretty blue-grey colour. There are thousands of them in Mekka, and an endowment fund exists for supplying them with grain. Two little stone troughs, sunk in the ground of the open quadrangle, are constantly kept filled with water for their use. One man holds the office of dispenser of the grain to the pigeons, while another holds that of waterer to them. This gives some idea of the manner in which work is found for the eight hundred servants of the Mosque. It has been asserted by the Mekkans, in all ages, that neither the sacred pigeons, nor any other bird, ever perches on the roof of the Kaaba. Sleeping, every night for some months, on a roof which overlooked that of the Kaaba, I had a good opportunity of testing the truth of this assertion. I have repeatedly searched the roof of the sacred building, and have never once seen there either a bird or any other living thing. At times when the roofs of the makâms of the imâms, and the ground below them, were covered with myriads of pigeons, I have constantly seen the Kaaba's roof bare and silent. The Shaybi, too, informed me that no defilement of birds is ever found there.

A Mekkan, seeing a thoughtless hâjji or slave sitting, or sleeping, with his feet outstretched in the direction of the Kaaba, at once points out to him the sacriligious nature of his posture. Similarly, a Korân is never allowed to remain on the ground if it is seen there by some more enlightened Mekkan. They uphold the sanctity of their Haram in every way.

To sit and contemplate the Kaaba while pondering upon God is in itself an act of worship, and this act is frequently indulged in by the Mekkans. Old men, sitting under the cloisters, with a beatific expression on their time-worn faces, have said to me some such words

as these: "When we are young we are ignorant. We leave the land of God and travel abroad. But when we are old we understand the Truth. So now we sit always in Mekka, and if we had not been ignorant in our youth, we would never have left her. . . . Not for an hour." They sit, these old wise men, contemplating the Kaaba with their physical eyes, and visualising Paradise with the mind's eye. Perhaps the material eye, sometimes in those long silent sittings, sees eye to eye with that of the mind. Beyond the cloisters, the Kaaba stands shimmering in the burning sunlight, as they gaze at it. One of these old men had seen the Prophet in a dream, "and his face was like the full moon shining—God bless him and give him peace"; and he had told him not to leave Mekka again. Another, a Kurd of an ascetic and emaciated appearance, told me, as the days went by, that the Kaaba was God—that God was in every man, and in every tree and every stone. He was a sûfi* of an advanced doctrine. I counselled him not to tell the Wahhâbîs so. Thereupon, looking at me with a fatalistic stare, inhuman and passionless, he said that punishment or reward, pain or pleasure, Hell or Paradise, were nothing to him. Not being possessed of his stoicism, I ceased to associate with that man, for fear of the Wahhâbîs; but had we been in the shadow of a more tolerant government, I should have asked him to initiate me in the mysterious tenets of his order.

Other men whom I met, in the quiet shadowed cloisters of this great Islamic Club, were exiles whose

* A sûfi is one who seeks mystical union with God. By concentration of thought, and by living an ascetic life, he seeks to lose consciousness of the material world, and of himself as a material being. The word is derived from sûf (wool), and probably has reference to the material in which some of these ascetics were clothed.

native countries were under foreign rule, and two of them had been sentenced to death, in their absence, by the French Government of Syria.

Within the walls of that Sanctuary, Malays murmured of the riverside villages of Sumatra; Javans talked of the "fire mountains" of their native island; cunning-eyed Indians chattered without ceasing; Turks mused sleepily; hooded Moors spoke sternly together; Mekkan shaykhs sat surrounded by their docile pupils; here sat a party of Mongolian-featured Bokhârans; in the alcoves against the great wall, poor Africans ate their frugal meals out of tin cans and gourds. About the eastern gates parties of Wahhâbîs lounged on elbows, or lay sleeping—flung about like a bivouaked squadron, all mixed up with their swords. In and out among the groups, the zemzemis passed with their clay water-vessels, giving the multitude to drink.

Suddenly, into the murmur of voices, comes the sharp sound of hard-wood sticks beating on the stone pavement. It is the Mosque servants waking the sleepers, for the hour of prayer is at hand. They strike their long staves on the ground near anyone who sleeps, shouting the while, "Es-sollâ! Es-sollâ!" (Prayer! Prayer!) Soon all are roused, and those who need fresh ablutions retire to the water-places without the Mosque, in order to perform them.

If it be near sunset, a great crowd now throngs into the Haram—for all attend the sunset prayer, even though they miss many of the others. The declining sun lights up the white or grey façades of the houses which rise in tiers on the hill of Abi Cubays. From the northward and southward, the blue of the sky turns to rich and richer gold. As the sun sets, the first notes of the adân

are quavered forth by the shaykh of the muaddins, from the roof of the Zemzem building. Instantly, the air is a-ring with long musical cries, swelling in crescendo, fading in diminuendo, which come singing out of the arrow-heads of the Haram's seven spires. As the last long note dies away, one stationed beneath the Makâm el Hanafî rises and chants the igâma. At once all the congregation rise and form in rows—wreathing the Kaaba about with human rings. Everywhere in the congregation there is brilliant colour, contrasting sharply with the Kaaba in its dull black covering. Turbans red, black, yellow, white, green, vermilion, pink, orange, and blue are there—like flowers in some strange garden. As varied in colour are the jubbas and jackets of the Mekkans, but the white thawb preponderates if the season be hot. Behind the Makâm el Hanbalî, the Wahhâbîs display a great patch of dull browns, relieved only by the dirty white of the breasts of their thawbs, and the chequered red and white of their head-dresses. No sound is heard. Into the waiting silence comes the voice of the imâm. Anon, all bow down as one man, with hands on knees. Rising upright again, they drop swiftly to the kneel, and bowing their heads, place their foreheads to the ground, murmuring the response to the imâm's words "Allah Akbar!" Many a time I have delayed my kneeling for a few seconds in order to see that vast many-coloured throng prostrate itself as one man in circles about the Kaaba.

The obligatory prayer being ended, the members of the congregation perform their supererogatory devotions independently, and then sit telling their beads, or talking together in groups.

Many of the Mekkans swear oaths by "the Exalted Kaaba," or by "the Ancient House," but such oaths

are considered irreligious. The Muslim is enjoined to swear by none other than God. This oath takes three forms:—

1. Wallah! (a combination of "wa" and "Allah") is used for emphatic assertion, e.g. Wallah! it is as I say!

2. Billah! denotes urgent request, e.g. Billah! give me to drink!

3. Tallah! denotes emphatic disgust. This form is rare in speech. One of the Ashrâf, speaking of the Wahhâbî governor of Et-Tâif, said to me, "Tallah! his speech made me ill."

In their prime, most of the Mekkans are physically robust and muscular, of medium height and well formed. This community is of so composite a nature, however, that a general rule cannot be accurately stated concerning their physical or their moral attributes. In complexion, they range from coal-black to sallow-white, these two extremes being accounted for by the custom of keeping African and Circassian concubines. The son of a slave woman by a free-man is himself a free-man, and enjoys the same family rights, of inheritance and so forth, as does his half-brother whose mother is a free-woman and the legal wife of his father. A Mekkan who has a fair-skinned wife usually prefers to take as his concubine the blackest slave-woman he can find in the market, provided she be comely as well as black.

In old age many of the Mekkans become gaunt and emaciated; they are seldom fat, though this condition is occasionally seen. In general, they are short-lived rather than the contrary, which is not surprising when the situation and climate of their city are considered. The temperature of Mekka varies between 45° C. in the shade at midsummer, and 20° C. in the cold

weather, but the true causes of the deadliness of its climate are the lack of all movement in the atmosphere on many of the hottest days and nights, and the dampness which prevails in the rainy season. In the hot season, I have frequently found it difficult to walk a few hundred yards in the early morning, on account of the languidness produced by the stifling atmosphere, though the actual temperature was inconsiderable. Light breezes passing over the mountain-tops have no power to stir the air in the lifeless depths of the Mekkan valley. The rainy season is the most fatal to the Mekkans, and this lasts from the beginning of November to the end of January. A shower fell as early as the 20th of September while I was in Mekka, however, and another as late as the middle of March. Thunderstorms, accompanied by rain, may occur at any time of the year, but are unusual at midsummer. The heaviest and most frequent rainfalls occur in November.

The Mekkans still tell of the great flood which poured into Mekka in 1909, making of the Haram a great lake, the surface of which rose, at one time, higher than the threshold of the Kaaba. They were occupied for several weeks in clearing away the mud which coated everything which the water had reached, including the floor of the Kaaba itself.

When rain falls every householder places large tin dishes, empty petrol tins, or other receptacles, beneath the water-spouts of his roof in order to collect the rain-water. Everybody is delighted at such a time, and the children on the house-tops, as they splash like sparrows in the quickly-forming puddles, sing a little hymn beginning with the words: "O God! O Generous! send of Thy bounty upon Thy servants."

The Mekkans say that small vermin, such as lice and fleas, cannot exist in their city, as the hot dry climate is fatal to them. My own experience is in accord with this, for during my stay in Mekka I saw no sign of any of these pests, though at the time of my entry into Arabia I was not the sole occupant of my clothing. The Mekkans are a clean community; and their linen, which they change at least once a week and often more frequently, is always washed with soap, very thoroughly, and ironed, by the women. I doubt if even the Mekkan climate can avail to sterilize some of the Egyptian and Indian hâjjis; but the fact remains that the houses of Mekka are, or become when vacated, free from vermin.

On the death of a Mekkan, the women of the house set up a brief wailing. Once or twice by night, as I lay on my roof, I was awakened by this sad piteous crying filling the silent darkness with a heart-broken moaning. In Mekka the wailing is very brief, however, for the Prophet forbade prolonged wailing for the dead. The women friends of the bereaved family at once hasten to the house, whence, having pacified the afflicted women, they soon depart. The same day the body, having been washed, is borne out on a bier for burial. The bier is placed on the pavement of the Matâf, in front of the door of the Kaaba. The brief burial-prayers are then repeated by one of the mourners, all of whom remain standing. It is then lifted again, and borne through the Janâiz gate to the Maala, the mourners relieving each other, in quick succession, of the duty of bearing it. Passers-by will also run to take a turn at this duty, and the bearers are constantly changed without the pace of the procession being slackened. No coffin is used; the dead, wrapped in a

simple white shroud, being buried in a hollow grave which is undercut in the bottom of one side of a vertical shaft. The shroud is commonly soaked in Zemzem water and allowed to dry before being used. After the interment, the male friends of the deceased pay a brief visit of condolence to the male members of the family. Simplicity and brevity mark these ceremonies.

Often a Korân-reading is held in the house of the deceased on the seventh and fortieth days after his death.

Frequently my companions spoke of the plague, and from them I learnt many gruesome details of the effects of this terrible affliction. In the Pilgrimage of 1326, Yûsef, leaving Mina with twelve pairs of hâjjis in shugdufs, had found only six persons of the twenty-four alive when they reached Mekka. All along the road, and in the streets of the city, dead bodies lay strewn in hundreds. Trenches were dug in the graveyards, and the bodies were stacked in them, but so great was the mortality that the dogs fed upon many of the bodies before they could be buried.

Life in Mekka seemed to me, sometimes, attractive; and at other times, horrible. The quietness and simplicity of life in the desert town, and the freedom from inquisition which characterises its inhabitants in their dealings with the stranger, were grateful.* On the other hand, the absorption of all classes in matters of profit and loss, and their lack of precision in discussing any useful matter, not excepting their religion, created an atmosphere of discomfort and hopelessness. The Ashrâf, however, many of whom have been educated

* I must add that there would be no freedom from inquisition for anybody who was not thoroughly conversant with Muhammadan religious practice.

in Constantinople, are generally well endowed with all such knowledge as may be improved by intelligent reading of the Arabic newspapers, and the religious heads of the community deliver their lectures as ably as do the 'ulemâ of Cairo.

Sometimes life in Mekka seemed to take on the strangeness of insanity. Mentally comparing the manners of many of my companions with those of the dwellers in more fortunate countries, I found them repulsive. Sometimes I have felt, when they joked together, that laughter like theirs belonged within the walls of a mad-house, and that the counterpart of their grimacing faces and starting eyes could only be seen through the aperture in the door of a padded cell. Ordinary conversation is often carried on with such violent gesticulation as other races reserve for passionate argument. When discussion develops into quarrelling, their quick yelling voices rise in deafening pandemonium. In a moment more the strife subsides, and they are again grinning together in senseless good humour. Sometimes I have left their company, and gone to a little chandler's shop, where I have casually bought sheets of the ancient English newspapers in which the shop-keepers wrap their customers' purchases. Then, retiring to my room, I have lost consciousness of my surroundings in reading last year's news of England.

One of the most objectionable characteristics of the Mekkan is his vainglory. For so many hundreds of years he has been obliged by his profession, or by the mere fact of being a "neighbour of God," to adopt the attitude of a teacher to the pilgrims, that he has come to consider himself as belonging to a superior race. I have heard a mutawwif tell an ignorant hâjji that his intercession with the Creator on the Day of Judgment

would be sufficient to ensure the hâjji's entrance into Paradise.

On the other hand they are manly men and very human, and their affability and conversational powers make them pleasant companions at a coffee-party or on the road. At such times they are simple and agreeable. At the mention of a deceased person whom they knew in life, they feelingly and reverently murmur "God's mercy upon him!"

V

WOMEN AND SLAVES

MEKKAN girls are usually given in marriage at the age of thirteen or fourteen years. From the age of five or six until they are married, those of the better classes scarcely ever leave their father's harîms. During this period they learn to perform household duties, and are taught how to pray. Many of them also acquire sufficient knowledge to read aloud—though without proper understanding—the Korân, and certain religious chants known as gasîdas. After marriage, a woman never leaves her husband's house save to attend the birth, marriage, or death ceremonies of relatives, unless it be for a rare visit to the Haram. On the occasion of any outing of this sort, the women are accompanied by their female slaves, if they possess slaves, and also by a son, or trusted male slave, of the master of the house. Wealthy people who possess eunuch slaves employ them in the surveillance of their women on such occasions. A husband never walks with his wife, even though their destination be the same. So jealously are women secluded from the stranger's gaze, that even the decrepit water-carrier inserts the mouth of his water-skin into a hole in the wall outside the door of the harîm apartments, and pours the water through, whence it runs down a stone channel into the tank in the kitchen. In the case of many of the poorer families, however, most of these precautions are of necessity relaxed, as the wife has many additional duties

to perform, and may even be obliged frequently to leave her house for the purpose of shopping.

A woman's indoor dress consists of a pair of narrow cotton trousers, reaching to the ankles, and a cotton shirt; while about her head is bound a coloured kerchief, from beneath which her hair hangs down in two long plaits. In the cold weather, and in the hot weather also if she be entertaining company, she wears, over the above-mentioned garments, a gaily-coloured cotton frock which extends to some six inches below the knees. Whenever she leaves her house, she dons a frock of this sort, and also a heavy black or blue-black cloak. The latter is simply a length of very heavy crepe, or similar cloth, nearly as large as a bed-sheet. It is so arranged as to cover the head and forehead, the hands, and the whole of the figure as far as the ankles. A long white veil of starched calico conceals her face up to the eyes. This is held in place by two tapes which, passing above the ears, are tied at the back of the head. Her feet are clad in stockings, and ankle-boots of soft yellow leather, and are then thrust into heel-less slippers. Arrayed in this attire, the Mekkan lady successfully presents that appearance the object of which is that she may not in the least degree disturb the minds of male strangers with unworthy desire.

The women of Mekka are considerably fairer in complexion than are the men. This is, doubtless, a result of the secluded life which they live. During my sojourn in Mekka I saw, by accident or design on their part or mine, a number of women at unveiled moments. Abdurrahmân's wife, and his sister, a young widow, both of whom I frequently encountered on the stairs, made very little attempt to hide their faces after I had been a month or two in the house. I always made a

point of repeating the words "Yâ Allah!" or "Yâ Sâtir!" in a loud voice when ascending the stairs, but frequently they failed to hear me. They would usually enquire as to my state with demure smiles, unless Abdurrahmân happened to be at hand.

Abdurrahmân's house being one of the tallest in our quarter, the windows of my apartment overlooked several house-tops on the opposite side of the way. Women and girls, in indoor undress, frequently made their appearance on these roofs, and my custom was to hasten, with averted eyes, to close the shutters whenever this unseemly spectacle was presented to me. When rain fell, however, a spirit of devilment arose on those roofs. At such times, women and children would swarm gaily up, and laugh and clap their hands, and sing a chant of thanksgiving, as they ran about in the rain. The little boys and girls would throw off their clothes and expose themselves to the cool falling rain-drops. Finding something attractive in this simple gaiety, I sometimes neglected to shut out the sight of my neighbours, but sat on a cushion before the open casement in order to enjoy the sight of the rain-drops which were falling between them and me.

Walking once in the outskirts of the city, I came upon the unusual sight of three ladies accompanied only by some children. Their veils were thrown up over their heads, leaving their faces exposed, and they appeared to be taking the air. The lane was quite deserted save for ourselves, and they made no attempt to adjust their veils as I approached. Instead, they stood motionless, in an attitude of expectancy. They doubtless divined easily enough that I was not a Mekkan. Their challenge was so obvious that I saluted them gravely with "peace be upon you." One of them at once turned

about, blushing, but the other two chorused "and upon *you* be peace and the mercy of God." The accent on the word "you" was very pronounced, so I gave them a little verse of poetry from Hafni Bey Nâsif's book of grammar. At that they all laughed and turned away. They were probably about twenty years of age, and two of them were slim and beautiful. Their dark eyes were large and lovely, and their complexions of a light golden brown.

Women pilgrims frequently wear their national costumes, except during the actual days of the Pilgrimage, but in Mekka they all wear veils, whatever the custom may be in their own countries. Some of them frequently remove their veils, however, and I have seen them sitting bare-faced in the Haram, particularly Malay women. The Mekkans excuse such lax conduct with the remark that those who are guilty of it are ignorant foreigners, and that such is "their custom." The Wahhâbîs, however, mutter curses on the offenders.

Beside household duties, which include washing and ironing all the linen of the family, the women of a Mekkan household occupy their time in gossiping together, in sleeping, in reading the Korân, and in reciting long religious chants of which the most popular is "The Nativity of the Prophet." Most of them are inordinately addicted to the smoking of tobacco through the medium of the shîsha. Many of them are more or less accomplished players on the lute and the drum, and in this amusement they take great delight, although it is not considered to be highly respectable.

Sabri was very susceptible to the charms of music, and on one occasion he told of an experience of his in

this connection. He said that, when a youth of seventeen, he used to hear the two daughters of his father's neighbour, Abdul Hâdi, singing and playing on the lute so skilfully that he felt he must see them with his eye.

"Every night they sang and hit the lute like afrîts," said he. "How shall I tell you! Was this hitting the lute, or the work of the jinn? At last my mind said to me: 'You must see the daughters of Abdul Hâdi, O Sabri!' "

"The next night," continued he, "I saw Hamîd, the father of the blue jacket . . ."

"I know him," interjected Yûsef, "the son of Abdul Hâdi."

"Always wore a blue jacket," said Sabri, with a nod. "God show him mercy." Here he quickly muttered a supplicatory prayer for the departed Hamîd, ending loudly with the words "The Fâtiha." All present repeated the words of the Fâtiha, and before the "Âmîn" had given place to silence, Sabri proceeded: "I said to Hamîd, 'Come here, O my brother! It is my intention to ask you something.'

" 'Yes,' said he to me, 'what thing?'

"I want to see your sisters hitting the lute. Can you get me into the harîm?

"Said Hamîd, 'Come!'

"We entered the house, and 'Take this!' says Hamîd, handing me a shîsha. 'Carry it upstairs!'

"We went up, Hamîd carrying a lamp, and I carrying the shîsha. At the top of the house we stopped before the door of the harîm. Hamîd put the lamp on the floor, and said to me, 'Give me the shîsha, and hide your moustache!'

"As I tell you, O Gathering!" says Sabri, "Hamîd

opened the door of the harîm, and I was hiding my moustache like this" (protruding his lower lip so that it covered the upper one).

"We went in, and some of the women screeched 'What is this? a man! a man!'

" ' Man what?' says Hamîd. 'A boy, this!' and his hand was pressing down on my shoulder, so that I bent my knees and sat on the floor. A lute this! A lute! I never heard anything like it! There, against the further wall, sat the daughters of Abdul Hâdi, playing and singing. Hitting, I tell you, the lute! and their voices! . . . One of the girls was sitting with the lute, hitting . . . I tell you, hitting! . . . the other was holding the drum, and the two of them singing. Said my mind to me: 'What is this, O Sabri? These are not girls. They are afrîts!' "

"What was the appearance of the girls?" asked old Yûsef. "One of them is married to Abu Sâlih, the Zemzemi in Bâb es-Salâm."

"Beautiful!" says Sabri, enthusiastically. "Sweet! I tell you, O Gathering, beautiful like the moon! . . . Wearing silk, and their eyes blackened with kohl, and hands stained with henna. . . . We were in great enjoyment, and then the door opened, and . . . Wallah, O Gathering, entered my mother.

" 'What is this?' she said. 'You here, O son of a pig . . . in the harîm!'

" 'I carried the shîsha, O my mother,' I said to her, 'and now I descend.'

" 'Go, O dog!' she said to me, and I descended."

The recital of these reminiscences was greeted by Sabri's audience with smiles of delight.

"But one of the eyes of Abu Sâlih's wife has a spot in it," said Abdurrahmân.

"Nothing against her!" rejoined Hasan. "The other eye is the best you could wish for."

The Mekkans believe that many of their women are skilled in witchcraft. This dark art is said to be employed by a woman to prevent her husband from taking a second wife, or to induce him to do her will in other matters. Upon a bride's joining a harîm in which there are already other wives, the latter frequently endeavour to cast a spell upon her, in order to make her ill or mad, so that the husband shall find no more pleasure in her. A woman who has no skill in sorcery procures the assistance of one who possesses the necessary knowledge.

There was a young woman in a house near Abdurrahmân's, who was constantly fighting with her mother-in-law and other women in the house. Sometimes her husband would shackle the poor girl with iron fetters, and shut her up in a dark room. She was said to have been bewitched by his other wives. I asked Yûsef how this enchanting was done, but he said he knew not, as it was a practice outside God's religion, and known only to women—"God curse them," he added.

There are shaykhs who are able to restore a bewitched woman to her normal condition by reciting certain passages from the Korân while looking her in the eyes with mesmeric concentration. The words are afterwards written down on paper, which is then soaked in water, and the patient drinks the mixture. The treatment is said to be infallible in the hands of a really pious and learned man. Yûsef said there are other ways of effecting a cure, and mentioned the case of a girl who was given over to one, Ibn Hishâm, for treatment. He kept her shut up in his house for four

days, and nobody knew what he did to her, but when she came out again "she was as quiet and tractable as a baby ever afterwards."

As a result of the high mortality rate in Mekka, particularly in times of pestilence, many children become orphans. These are usually adopted by relatives or kinsmen, and in the main they share the fortunes of the foster-parents' children. In some cases, however, where no direct tie of kinship and little true affection exists, these children are looked upon as so much merchandise to be exploited for gain. The boys will be set to work by which they may earn money for their foster-father, and the little girls will be reared with a view to realising as large a dowry as possible when they are old enough to be given in marriage. In order that the latter transaction may prove lucrative, the foster-parents train the little girls in the arts of allurement. When they are ready for marriage, an agent is employed to dispose of them for a good dowry to a man of wealth. Orphan children of the lower classes are sometimes even sold as slaves. These practices are carried on in secret, and are condemned by the majority.

Although polygamy is fairly common in Mekka, the majority of Mekkans have only one wife. Many of them, however, own slave-women whom they take as concubines. The Korânic passage which sanctions polygamy occurs near the commencement of the Chapter entitled *Women*: "Marry those women who are pleasing to you—two, or three, or four. But if ye fear that ye cannot act equitably [to each of them], then [marry] one [only]." From this it might be argued that polygamy, rather than monogamy, is the ideal state.

By limiting the number of wives that a man may

have at one time to four, the Korân confined polygamy within very narrow bounds, as compared with the licentious customs which prevailed in Arabia before the time of Muhammad. The licence of concubinage, however, remains unlimited, save in so far that the Korân repeatedly insists that one of the most meritorious acts in the sight of God is the manumission of slaves. It is obvious that the tendency of this injunction is to eliminate slavery entirely; and consequently, the ultimate ideal would include the abolition of concubinage, since a free-woman cannot become a concubine without committing adultery, for which the penalty is death.

Divorce is not frequently resorted to, in spite of the trifling nature which characterises it in Islamic law. By the Muhammadan jurists, it is classed among those things which are "disliked," and it is, therefore, reprehensible. A man has merely to say to his wife "I divorce thee," and she is then no longer his wife. He may, however, take her back again without being under the necessity of obtaining her consent. This he may do twice, but on saying "I divorce thee" for the third time, he releases her finally. The latter result may also be compassed at once by the husband's declaring a triple divorce. After this he cannot re-marry her unless, and until, she has married and been divorced by a third party, and then only with her consent. A woman has no direct power to divorce her husband; but in the event of his sexual impotence, cruelty, or neglect of her, she may apply to the Câdi for a decree of divorce if her husband refuses to divorce her.

The Muslim laws which regulate the relations between man and woman compare favourably with the similar laws of Moses.

I heard of one case in Mekka of a man who had divorced fifteen wives; but in general, the Mekkans who tire of their women on account of barrenness or fading charms, retain them in their harîms, and marry a new wife. This at least gives provision of food and shelter to the unfortunate women, many of whom would become homeless beggars if divorced. A man who already has four wives, and wishes to marry another woman, makes a temporary provision for the wife whom he is thereby obliged to divorce, or he may give her in marriage to a poor relative, or a servant, and himself provide her dowry. Under Islamic law, a woman enjoys complete control of her own possessions, and she may also inherit property. The latter right was generally denied to Arabian women before the time of Muhammad.

The women of Mekka wear few ornaments of jewellery. Most of their finery of this nature is of silver, plated with gold. The use of pure gold for this purpose is prohibited by the religious law, though some of the wealthy wear it, notwithstanding. A heavy chain, from which depends a large Spanish gold coin is frequently worn about the neck. Some of these chains are threefold, and have small coins hanging from each loop. Plain or roughly engraved rings are worn on the fingers, and a large flat ring on each great toe.

In Turkish times there were a number of immoral women in Mekka, but when the Hijâz became independent during the Great War, King Husayn expelled them from the city. I was told that there were still prostitutes among the poor African women living in the village of huts which lies in the Misfala, but I never saw a sign of this sort of indecorum anywhere in Mekka.

With regard to slavery, this practice originated as a result of warfare and conquest. Under Islamic law, unbelievers who commit an act of aggression against the Muslims are offered, upon the outbreak of the resulting hostilities, the alternatives of embracing Islâm, of paying tribute and retaining their own religion and property, or of fighting to the death. Under the second of these conditions, the destitute enemies of the Islamic State were often enslaved in default of paying their tribute. The legality of this is doubtful. Under the third condition, they were often captured and enslaved instead of being massacred; and it was held that such captives were still to remain slaves even though they subsequently embraced Islâm, or offered to pay tribute. That which is generally known as the slave traffic—that is, the simple kidnapping of slaves by dealers for trade purposes, as was done extensively in Africa until recent years, and is still done to a slight extent there and elsewhere—is quite illegal in Islamic law.

Now when we consider two important facts, we cannot fail to draw the conclusion that the religion of the Korân, rightly practised, would soon bring about the complete cessation of slavery in the Islamic State, if no hostile act leading to war was committed against that State. The first of these two facts is that the Korânic law does not sanction unprovoked war by its followers or unbelievers. If no aggression occurred, then, no new slaves would ever be taken. The second fact is, that again and again, the Korân reiterates the teaching that one of the most acceptable acts in the sight of God is the liberation of slaves. In an ideal Muslim community, therefore, slavery must soon cease to exist.

Many pious Muhammadans have spent large sums of money in the manumission of slaves. According to Ibn Hajar, the third Khalîfa, Othmân, purchased with his private money, and then released, no fewer than 2,400 slaves during his lifetime.

The Korânic verses enjoining the release of slaves seem to have induced a feeling in the owners of these unfortunate creatures that they held them merely on sufferance, and in consequence of this slaves have in all ages been well treated—and are still well treated, as I know from personal observation. I do not suggest that kindness was always, or even frequently, shown to them in the heat of battle at the moment of capture, nor even in the subsequent period before they were allotted or sold to their final owners. But when once they became settled in the homes of their masters, they appear to have been consistently treated as junior members of the family.

The slaves in Mekka, all of whom are Muslims, are employed by their owners as domestic servants, door-keepers, water-carriers, grooms, personal attendants and so on. In the oases of Et-Tâif, Wâdi Fâtma, El Husaynîya, and Wâdi Lîmûn, they work at agriculture; and the slaves of the Bedouins act as shepherds and camel-masters. Generally speaking, the slave works for his master as cheerfully as though the latter were his father. The master, for his part, feeds the slave on practically the same food as he himself eats; generally, though not always, clothes him adequately; and invariably treats him with tolerant kindness, however clumsy or foolish he may be.

In truth, such is the special meaning which the word "slave" now bears, by reason of the cruelties which have been inflicted upon beings known under that

appellation, that it is scarcely correct to apply it to the 'abd or mamlûk of the Muhammadans.

The wealthy Mekkans take a pride in having their slaves taught to chant the Korân and to read. The majority of the slaves are dull and stupid, but some of those kept as personal attendants by the Ashrâf and other prominent men have manners which can only be described as charming. These personal attendants are always clean and well-dressed, and they often carry handsome weapons when escorting their masters.

Most people who own several male slaves also possess female slaves; and the latter are given in marriage to the former. A master may marry his slaves, one to another, at his will; and a slave may have two wives, though few have more than one. Frequently, the male slave of one owner is married to the female slave of another, and in such case the offspring of the union belong to the woman's owner. If a slave-woman bears a child to her owner, he is enjoined to free her and then marry her. In any case the child is free, unless the father repudiates paternity, in which latter case it becomes his slave. I heard of a case of this sort, but such are very infrequent. Some of the poor students, Malays and Indians principally, who settle in Mekka for a term of years in order to study religion, marry slave-women belonging to Mekkans. They are too poor to buy the freedom of the women, and accordingly the issue of such a "marriage" is born into slavery, and becomes the property of the woman's owner. There is something peculiarly barbarous in a man's being married to a woman who is the property of another man; and how far the being who makes such an arrangement can truthfully be designated a man, is perhaps open to argument. They simply purchase the

right to cohabit with the woman, and the learned excuse the transaction by saying that it is better than indulgence in unnatural vice. The sanctions for unholy transactions such as this will not be found in the Korân. They have been invented at different times by the faqîhs, or jurists, to accord with the wishes of the sultâns, or other masters, whom they served. Other means failing, there always remained the simple method of inventing a false tradition of the Prophet in order to justify the desired measure.

Some masters will permit a slave to employ his spare time in seeking gain, by working as a water-carrier, or at some handicraft. In this way the slave may, in time, amass sufficient money to buy his freedom. A hard master, however, will claim all the earnings of his slave as his own property, and this the law entitles him to do. Slaves are frequently set free on the death of their master, under a clause in his will. In the absence of such a clause, they are inherited by his heirs, together with the rest of his property. They are now so expensive to purchase, that very few are freed during the master's lifetime, save such as are too old to work. Superannuated slaves, male and female, are sometimes freed and turned out by their owners into the street. In such a case they have no recourse but to become beggars. Several of these poor creatures, some of them women, were living in the Haram during my stay in Mekka. They slept on the pavement of the cloisters, grown almost impervious to the discomforts of cold and mosquitos; and by day they sat at the gates, and held out their gaunt claws for alms. I suppose some of them are there still.

A number of new slaves still reach Mekka from the Yemen and from Africa, and occasionally from Asia

Minor, but the majority are children born of slaves in Mekka.

When the Progress party attained to power in Constantinople, the Turks endeavoured to abolish slavery in the Hijâz. The real ruler of that province, however, was always the Sharîf of Mekka, and against his opposition, supported by that of the Ashrâf and Mekkans generally, the power of the Turks was unable to prevail.

Now by Article Seven of the Treaty of Jidda (signed in May, 1927), Ibn Sa'ûd agrees to co-operate with the British Government, by every means within his power, in the suppression of the slave trade.

VI

LAWS AND THEIR SOURCE

EL Islâm, the religion revealed to mankind through the medium of Muhammad, teaches absolute unequivocal monotheism. God is One, Eternal, Omnipotent.

The Muhammadans believe that El Islâm constitutes the final and perfect expression of the original true religion which has been followed by mankind, with varying degrees of faithfulness, since the creation. Adam was the first of the prophets of God.

Judaism was the true revelation of God, but it was, in due course, abrogated by Christianity, whose followers were taught by Isa (Jesus Christ) to worship the One God. The Muslims believe that the doctrine of the Trinity is an invention of Christendom, subsequent to the ascension of Christ into Heaven. They believe that the copies of the Pentateuch, and of the Gospel, existing at the present day, have been tampered with and altered drastically, so that they now contain many blasphemies and untruths, and are only fit to be ignored by followers of the true religion.

Christianity was, in its turn, succeeded by El-Islâm, and the latter form of the original religion is the only right way of life for all mankind existing in the world, subsequent to its revelation.

There exists a so-called Gospel, known as the Gospel of Barnabas, in which it is asserted that the apostleship of Muhammad was foretold in plain words by God to Adam. I do not know that this collection of fables is

set much store by among the more old-fashioned Muslims, as these do not concern themselves much with proofs which seek to support the testimony of the Korân. For such, the Korân itself is sufficient. It is the Word of God, and requires no proof, nor any support. The new, half-Europeanised type of Muhammadans, however, have eagerly seized upon the Gospel of Barnabas, and an Arabic translation of it, entitled "Injîl Barnâba," is printed in Cairo and sold extensively there and in the cities of Syria.

The Gospel of Barnabas is supposed to have been originally written in Latin, or in Spanish, by an European convert to Islâm—possibly one who had been a Christian monk. It was probably written during the Arab occupation of Spain.

In Chapter XXXIX of this book, Jesus Christ, addressing his disciples, is reported as saying:

"Now when Adam had risen upon his feet, he saw in the atmosphere a writing, shining with light like the sun, the text of which was—'There is no god but The God; and Muhammad is the Prophet of God.'

"Whereupon Adam lifted up his voice and said: 'I offer Thee thanks, O Lord my God! because that Thou hast shown grace and hast created me. But I humbly beseech Thee that Thou enlighten me as to what is the meaning of the words—"Muhammad is the Prophet of God." '

"Then God answered, saying, 'Be thou at ease, O my servant, Adam! Verily I say unto thee that thou art indeed the first man whom I have created. And this which thou hast seen, verily it [refers to] thy descendant who shall come unto the world after many years. And he shall be My Prophet, for whose sake I created all things. Who, when he cometh,

shall give light to the world. He whose soul was preserved in a heavenly light for sixty thousand years before I created any thing.'

"'Then Adam humbled himself to God, saying, 'O Lord! Grant that I may have this writing upon the finger-nails of my hands.'

"And God permitted the first man to have that writing upon his thumbs—upon the thumb-nail of his right hand the text 'There is no god but The God'; and upon the thumb-nail of his left hand the text 'Muhammad is the Prophet of God.' Then the first of mankind kissed these words with a paternal affection; and rubbed them upon his eyes and said 'Blessed be that day in which thou [i.e. Muhammad] shalt come unto the world.' "

Thus, according to the Gospel of Barnabas, did the Messiah speak to his disciples.

It may be of interest that Muhammad himself is reported to have said: "He who, upon hearing the muaddin's words—'I testify that Muhammad is the Prophet of God'—shall say, 'Welcome to my beloved and my consolation; Muhammad ibn Abdulla, God bless and give him peace,' and shall kiss his thumbs and place them upon his eyes, that man shall never become blind nor be afflicted with ophthalmia." Many of the Muslims perform this act as a preventive measure against blindness, whenever they hear the above-mentioned words repeated, in the course of the adân. It was doubtless this tradition of the Prophet which suggested to the author of the Gospel of Barnabas a part of the tale attributed to Jesus Christ, which is narrated in the quotation given above.

The religion of El-Islâm was sent down to the world in a series of messages from God to Muhammad, which

were borne by God's messenger, the Angel Gabriel. These messages were committed to memory by Muhammad's followers, and the majority of them were also inscribed on stones, on pieces of wood, or on the bones of dead animals. A class of men, known as "readers," came into being, who memorised the whole of the Korân and repeated it in the mosque, or whenever occasion demanded. After the Prophet's death, the whole of the messages were written down in the form of a book. This appears to have been done, principally, because the readers had commenced to differ somewhat in their renderings of the revelation. It is generally believed that the first to standardise the Korân in this way was Othmân, the third Khalîfa; though Abu Bakr appears to have attempted it. Since the time of Othmân, who was assassinated in 656 A.D., the text has remained unchanged.

The Korân consists, principally, of exhortations to righteousness, of social and religious legislation, and of historical matter. It is regarded as a miracle in itself, and as the source of all knowledge. In the final verse of the Chapter entitled *Yusef* occur the words:

> "[This Korân] is not a story which has been forged, but is the confirmation of that which preceded it [i.e. the true Pentateuch and Psalms, and the true Gospel], *and a clear explanation of all things*, and a guidance, and a mercy, unto people who believe."

The whole of the civil and criminal laws of a Muhammadan community, which is unchanged by foreign influences, are taken from the Korân and the Traditions of the Prophet's practice. Matters not covered by these two sources of law are dealt with according to the result of Ijmâ, that is, the unanimous agreement of

the companions of Muhammad, or if no such case occurred in their time, of the Four Imâns, or the religious heads of the Muslim people at any time. Failing a ruling or a precedent from all of these sources, a decision is arrived at by means of analogy (El-Qiyâs), that is, by comparing the case in question with similar cases already settled by the companions of the Prophet, or later authorities, but whose authority for ordering the settlement in question is unknown.

In the event of there arising, to-day, a controversy concerning some matter which had never arisen in Islâm before, and upon which the Korân and Traditions are silent, it would be settled by the general agreement of the learned heads of the four orthodox schools of jurisprudence. Said the Prophet: "My people will never agree in allowing sin."

On one occasion, I suggested to Abdulla ibn Belayhid, the Wahhâbî Chief Câdi of Mekka, that the time had now come when Islâm should be purged of slavery. I reminded him that the Muslimîn are proud to call El-Islâm a progressive religion, and that its sanction of ancient customs should therefore become modified with the progress of the world. He replied that it would be quite possible to abolish slavery by means of "ijmâ-l Muslimîn" (general agreement of the Muhammadans). This I give as an example of El Ijmâ.

The first laws imposed upon the Muslim* are those which command prayer, alms-giving, fasting, and pilgrimage.

Prayer is repeated five times daily: before sunrise, at midday, at mid-afternoon, immediately after sunset,

* The qualification for the title of "Muslim" (i.e. one who surrenders himself to God) is belief in the dogma "There is no god but The God: Muhammad is the Prophet of God."

and an hour and a half after sunset. There are also many special occasions of prayer, among them being the prayer on the two annual holidays, the Feast of Sacrifices and the feast at the conclusion of the fast of Ramadhân; the prayer repeated on the occurrence of an eclipse of the sun or moon; the prayer for rain, and so on. The special Friday prayer takes the place of the ordinary midday prayer on that day.

Alms-giving is rather taxation. Ez-zakâ (compulsory legal alms) is an annual capital levy of two and a half per centum on all live-stock and gold and silver, whether coin or ornaments. This is collected by the government, and is the sole revenue which a strictly Islamic government may receive. Ibn Sa'ûd compels the Bedouins to pay it. Spoils of war, and the tribute received from non-Muslim subject communities, are to be excepted from this statement, which deals with the revenue contributed by the Muslims themselves.

The giving of voluntary alms (sadaga) to the poor, to new converts to Islâm, towards the redemption of slaves, to the debtor who cannot pay his debt, to the fighter in the jihâd, and to the impecunious traveller, is also strongly enjoined upon the Muslim.

Fasting, which to the European would be the most irksome of these ritualistic laws, is the obligation which is more faithfully discharged throughout the Muslim world than is any other. I am convinced that in Mekka almost no man, unless he be ill, shirks the faithful fulfilment of this duty. From an hour and a-half before daybreak until the sun has set, the Muslim fasts completely for twenty-nine consecutive days in each year, namely, the whole of the month of Ramadhân. He may neither eat nor drink anything whatever, nor smoke tobacco, for an average time of fourteen hours

each day (according to the season of the year in which Ramadhân falls). Women fast also, unless they be pregnant or happen to be nursing very young babies. Children of the age of six or seven years fast for several hours, or for the half of each day.

Pilgrimage is commanded to be performed by every Muslim once in his lifetime, provided: 1 That he is sound in mind; 2 Has reached the age of puberty; 3 Is a free man (i.e. not a slave); 4 Has not to leave a position in which he is indispensable; 5 That the road is safe (it will be recalled that the pilgrimage was pronounced to be non-obligatory in 1925 because of the absence of this condition); 6 He is fit to travel; 7 Possesses sufficient provision for the road, and also a mount, without depriving his children of food, nor incurring debt. (The followers of the Mâliki school may dispense with the seventh condition; Mâlik thought it a merit in a destitute person to beg his way to Mekka.)

Another ordinance (which though not one of the five fundamental duties of a Muslim is of nearly equal importance with them) is the jihâd or holy war. It is the bounden duty of the followers of Muhammad to fight against an enemy who commits a hostile act against any part of the Islamic state. It is understood that this refers to the hostilities of unbelievers. A quarrel among Muslims would, theoretically, be settled at once by the arbitrary intervention of the Khalîfa.

The drinking of intoxicating beverages is forbidden by the Korân, and this prohibition is understood as extending to the smoking of intoxicants also. The eating of pig's flesh is forbidden, though the Muslim, unlike the Jew, may eat the flesh of the camel. Gambling is also illegal.

Before the Wahhâbî occupation, the smoking of

hashîsh (a preparation of hemp) is said to have been fairly common among the lower orders in Mekka, and an intoxicating drink, called bûza or arak, was also brewed and consumed there. Cocaine, too, was not unknown. It was possible, I believe, to procure arak in Mekka after the arrival of the Wahhâbîs, but only with great difficulty, on account of the risk of discovery. The Nejders imposed heavy fines and imprisonment for any offence against these prohibitions.

Many of the criminal laws of Islâm are Semitically drastic.

Capital punishment is inflicted for murder, adultery, paederasty, apostasy (unless the apostate recant), and blasphemy. A free-man may murder a slave without himself being executed, but if he kills a free-man or free-woman he must die, unless the act was committed in self-defence or under potent provocation. In the latter case, the blood price of one hundred camels, or their value, is paid to the relatives of the victim. Even wilful murder may be condoned in this way, with the consent of the relatives. The blood price for a free-woman is half that for a man, while that of a slave is equivalent to his market value. A Muslim, even though he be a slave, is not put to death for the murder of an unbeliever.

Retaliation for injuries is commanded, in accordance with the law "eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and for wounds [a like] retaliation" (Chapter *The Table*). Material compensation, however, may be legally accepted by the injured party.

Flogging (eighty stripes) is the punishment for drunkenness.

A man may be imprisoned for debt, or compelled to work in payment of what he owes. The penalty of

imprisonment, however, cannot be enforced against an insolvent debtor.

I went once to the Law Court, at the invitation of the Chief Câdi. The Court is situated adjacent to the north-western wall of the Haram, near the gate called Bâb ez-Ziyâda. It consists of three rooms, each of which is some thirty feet square. These rooms, together with another beside the Bâb Durayba, which is now used as a public library, were originally built by the Sultan Salîm I, as a school. In each of them was taught one of the four systems of jurisprudence.

The ceiling of each chamber consists of a lofty dome, from the apex of which hangs a lamp on the end of a long chain. Two only of the rooms are used as law-courts, the third being reserved as a private apartment of the Câdi. They are simply furnished with carpets and cushions, and each of them possesses a large iron-barred window, through which the Haram is visible.

When I arrived the Court was sitting. Abdulla ibn Belayhid, a bent and wizened little man, with a red henna-dyed beard, was sitting on a thick cushion at one side of the room. At his left hand was the iron-barred window, looking into the cloisters. On his knees he held a large book, in which he was writing extracts from the evidence. His clerk, who sat at his right hand, also made entries in a book. The parties to the suit were squatting before him, on the floor, while in the doorway stood two of the Sharta, dressed in Bedouin thawbs and kerchiefs. The old man had an insignificant presence, and a very weak voice; and the contending parties and their supporters were giving him a good deal of trouble with their eager efforts to improve or disprove one another's evidence.

As I entered the room, having previously sent in my

name by one of the policemen, the old gentleman honoured me with his cordial Arab smile, and motioned me to a seat on the cushions. The case proceeded for another ten minutes, when everybody rose and, helping his Honour to his feet, continued to support him for some time, as though they feared he might faint at any moment. But, no! he bore up; and then they all kissed his hand, policemen and plaintiffs, defendants and door-keepers, clerk and witnesses. The case would be resumed at el 'asr. This fact having been ascertained, they moved towards the door. Abdulla came and took me affectionately by the arm, and we passed into the inner room. Here we were served with luncheon by one of the policemen—rice and meat-balls followed by a sweetmeat known as kunâfa. In the midst of the repast the adân sounded, calling to mid-day prayers. As we stood up to say our prayers we could see the Kaaba through the window.

After prayers Abdulla began to discourse of the roads in the Hijâz. Had I a book which described them? I promised to lend him a small volume which dealt with that subject. Now the frontispiece of that book consisted of a portrait of the author—an Egyptian, and when the old man subsequently returned it, I found that the poor author's face had been obliterated. The making of pictures of living creatures is unlawful among strict Muslims. I am sure that the old man did not erase that offending visage. I have no doubt the pious deed was performed by one of his sons. But whoever did it improved the value of the book considerably, providing by that poor scrubbed portrait a tale of stern obedience to God's commands. Yet, in the Korân, the Muhammadans have no such definite command to avoid the making of likenesses of natural

objects as is contained in Exodus: "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, *nor the likeness of anything* that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth."

A servant of the Câdi now came in and reported the result of his efforts to procure a suitable slave-girl for the old gentleman. He had recently married a new wife, a little Mekkan girl, scarcely arrived at the age of puberty, as I heard, and wanted an additional slave-girl in his house for that reason.

Next there came in the policeman who had served us with luncheon, and who, having deposited the tray before us, had been invited by Abdulla to join us, which he did. This policeman was the Câdi's personal attendant, and was accustomed to follow his Chief about in close company with his shadow. At the gate of the Mosque it was his business to take charge of the old man's sandals, and to carry them until they were required again.

The policeman brought with him two little orphan children, who had come from the beseiged city of El Medîna in company with a crowd of refugees. Abdulla, out of the human kindness of his heart, had adopted these two little ones. Now they ran to him and kissed his hand, and answered his smiling questions as to whether they had eaten, whether they liked their new clothes, with "Yes, O my sir!" and "Praise to God!"

Then there came in a Bedouin youth, accompanied by two others. He desired to marry the cousin of one of his companions. All three youths kissed Abdulla's hand, which he allowed them to do, for it is permitted by the customs prevailing in Hâil, and these youths were tribesmen of Shammar. In public I have frequently seen the Câdi snatch his hand away from one

who would kiss it, and reprove him with stern words. Doubtless, however, he could not find it in his heart to reprove the northern custom when he heard the northern speech: he himself was a native of Ḥâil.

Manners are gentler in the northern marches of Arabia than they are in the southern Wahhâbî country about er-Riâdh, and fanaticism is hardly known there. Abdulla had not been reared among the original Wahhâbî tribes. As a subject of Ibn Rashîd, he had been opposed to the Wahhâbîs until a few years before, when Ibn Sa'ûd had captured Hâil and brought the rule of the Rashîd dynasty to an end. I imagine that the old man was given the exceedingly important position of Chief Câdi of the Hijâz for the reason that, while earnestly believing in the tenets of the Wahhâbîs, he was not a fanatic: in short, he could be relied upon to do as Ibn Sa'ûd told him. The real Wahhâbî 'ulemâ, on the other hand, held the inconvenient opinion that the Sultân ought to be guided by them.

The Câdi enquired as to which of his visitors was the girl's guardian; and having ascertained that, he formally asked him whether he was willing to hand the girl over to the suitor for her hand. The guardian said that he consented. Thereupon, Abdulla took a tooth-stick from his pocket, and holding it in his right hand, began to clean his teeth. At the same time he proceeded to deliver instructions in a fatherly manner to the Bedouins, telling them exactly what they were to say in his presence in order to complete the marriage. Acting as he bid them, the guardian and the bridegroom grasped each other's right hands. The guardian then avowed his readiness to give the girl in marriage to the other for a dowry of two mejîdis and a she-camel. The bridegroom, prompted by Abdulla, accepted this,

and the marriage was an accomplished fact. Holding the tooth-stick between his teeth for a moment, the Câdi again submitted to have his hand kissed by the Bedouins, and then the latter strode quickly from the room. I asked Abdulla "Was it not necessary to produce the girl?"

"No, O my son!" said he. "The guardian and the witness are sufficient."

The Câdi demanded no fee, nor was he offered one, and had he been engaged in teaching his children how to say "Peace be upon you!" or something equally simple, he could not have done it more casually.

I sat for some time conversing with the old man. He told me that in Hâil he was accustomed to settle sometimes more than a hundred disputes in a single morning. I left him before el 'asr, at which hour he was to resume his session in the court.

In the East—and by the East I mean the unchanged patriarchal East—it is felt that when justice is dispensed by a stranger to the disputants, within the walls of a court-house, it loses the element of humanity to some extent, and becomes not justice, but blind justice.

The Mekkans, then, prefer, whenever possible, to settle their disputes among themselves, with the assistance of some old shaykh whom they know, and who, even though he deliver judgment against them, will contrive to leave them without a feeling of grievance.

One morning an impressive company assembled in Abdurrahmân's mag'od. It appeared that one, Abdur Razzâg, went travelling, and that before leaving Mekka he had locked up his house and handed the keys to Shafîg, who was a relative of his by marriage. Shafîg was to inspect the house once a week, in order to ascertain that nobody had broken into it. The charge

now made against Shafîg was, that during Abdur Razzâg's absence he duly made his weekly inspection, but unduly brought away with him quantities of grain, flour, oil, and other articles, which were stored in the house. These things had been put by Shafîg to his own use. Upon the return of Abdur Razzâg, Shafîg faithfully surrendered the keys to their owner, telling him that everything in his house was as he had left it. Upon going to his house, however, Abdur Razzâg discovered that goods of the value of £120 were missing. The figure is Abdur Razzâg's. Shafîg admitted cordially that he had borrowed a trifling quantity of grain and flour, for which he was quite willing to pay. "Take four guineas or five," says Shafîg with wide liberality, "or whatever you say."

Lengthy and gesticulatory argument, extending over a period of days, having failed to result in a settlement of the dispute, to-day's meeting of the elders has been summoned. The judges are: Muhammad Nûr, an enormous muttawwif from Sûk el-Layl, possessing a thunderous voice; Abdul Hâdi, a thin man with a sharp-witted air, but only one eye; and Hâfiz, a fat, jolly, and sensual-looking man. These three sit in line, with their backs to the iron-barred window. Abdur Razzâg is accompanied by two of his friends, while Amm Yûsef and Abdurrahmân, assisted by Hasan and Sabri, are the supporters of Shafîg.

First of all, Abdur Razzâg tells his story with great indignation, everybody else remaining silent. When he has finished, Shafîg, who is squatting languidly in the middle of the circle, is called upon for his version of the occurrence. This, being difficult of proof, is exceedingly verbose. His explanation of the matter, put briefly, is that a thief broke into the house one night.

This, he says, he heard from a third person, who, however, he does not call to corroborate his story.

Upon the conclusion of Shafîg's speech, which he delivers with a sort of sad restraint, which seems to be precisely the right tone for one falsely accused, Abdur Razzâg bursts forth into indignant comment. He is sharply silenced by the enormous mutawwif. The judges then ask him to state the value of the missing property. For answer, he hands them three pages of foolscap, on which is written a list of the stolen articles. The thin man places the papers against his solitary eye, and reading the figure £120, he smiles broadly at Hâfiz.

"O Shafîg," says the enormous mutawwif, "you have no right to take a box of matches, nor a grain of wheat of people's property—neither from a relative, nor a stranger."

"Look here!" says the one-eyed man to Abdur Razzâg, "the right is with you. But what will you do? Will you go to the Law Court, and demand your right, and do this, and do that; or will you accept what we rule?"

Here everybody present, including Shafîg, animatedly bombard Abdur Razzâg with advice, until Muhammad Nûr, seeing, rather than hearing, him acquiesce in accepting their ruling, shouts "Patience! Listen to my speech!"

At once all are silent.

"And you, Shafîg! Will you accept our judgment?" he proceeds.

"For good, if it please Allah," says Shafîg piously.

"Good!" comment the judges, in chorus.

"We are not here to sentence you to go to prison, nor to force you to anything," says my host, Abdur-

rahmân, diplomatically. "You have called upon us to judge between you, and what we want is to rule the matter so that you may both be satisfied, and be friends. Not so, O Gathering?"

"God bless you, O my brother!" shouts Muhammad Nûr in delighted approval.

At this point, coffee arrives from Shafîg's house across the way, and we all sip.

All the while the case is proceeding, these admirable judges are keenly, but covertly, observing the two principals. They note from every change of expression, every glance of the eye, and every verbal remark, how the course of the trial is appealing to each party. If either the plaintiff or the defendant appears to be really disconcerted by the course to which justice is inclining, then it is the business of Their Honours to lift him onto a happier plane, by making a move in his favour. Such a move, however, must be carefully calculated so as not to unbalance the other party seriously. As we shall see, this delicate process of adjustment goes on until, finally, with a quick run-in, justice is achieved amid general plaudits and enthusiasm.

"What we have to do," says one-eyed Abdul Hâdi, as he sips his coffee, "is to decide what is a fair sum for Shafîg to pay. A hundred and twenty guineas," says he, with a tolerant smile at the company, "is . . . Tell me, Abdur Razzâg! you will accept how much?"

Abdur Razzâg mumbles undecidedly, and Amm Yûsef gets a word in for Shafîg by saying quickly, "We will say fifteen guineas."

"Fifteen guineas. Do you accept this?" asks Abdurrahmân.

The three judges look smilingly on.

"I have agreed to accept your ruling," says Abdur

Razzâg. "But fifteen guineas! I do not accept this. Never!"

"Hear the Fâtiha, O Gathering!" says Shafîg, with an air of righteous detachment from worldly affairs. He had been intently watching his opponent, waiting tensely to hear him accept the fifteen guineas. But he had refused, so now—the Fâtiha and piety.

"In the Name of God, The Very Merciful . . ." repeats Shafîg with saintly fervour, his right hand still grasping the mouth-piece of his shîsha, his coffee-cup at his knee.

"Amîn!" say all present, as Shafîg, having come to the end of the Fâtiha, recommences to draw at his shîsha.

"See here, Shafîg!"says Hâfiz, " it is quite understood that you are no thief. To take a little of the property of . . ."

"Do not say that word!" (meaning "thief") says Shafîg, with a grave and wounded air.

"No! Good!" says Hâfiz. "The meaning of my speech is that it is understood that you did not carry away the things. To take a little of . . ."

"I take refuge in God from that word. That word is not good," says the wronged but patient Shafîg, unable to forget it.

"I say the last word!" shouts the enormous mutawwif, thinking that the moment is ripe for judgment. "Shafîg will pay to Abdur Razzâg five guineas now, and will also give him a writing for fifteen guineas to be paid in the Hajj. . . . Do you agree?" his voice rises to a magnificent shout in order that he may be heard above the general burst of verbal admiration which greets this historic judgment.

Abdur Razzâg at last accepts, in rather an uncertain

manner. Shafîg then commences a splendid speech, in which he lays stress on his perfect blamelessness, but his effort is quickly drowned by the voices of everybody present, who are joking and exclaiming in their relief at the conclusion of the case. In the midst of this uproar, the three judges smilingly rise, adjust their belts and turbans, and saying, "In the keeping of God!" they leave, amid the sustained greetings and compliments of all present.

Abdur Razzâg valued his lost property at £120, so that it is quite possible that it was worth £30. Shafîg pays £20, and thus secures a good bargain. But the important point is that everybody, if not satisfied, is at least resigned, and the day after to-morrow the two principals will be cheating hâjjis in amicable partnership once more. If justice had been dealt out, one of the parties, if not both of them, would have felt himself wronged. By the Mekkan method, even the offender is made to feel more or less satisfied—more so, perhaps, than the complainant in many cases. They do not seek justice so much as that comfortable feeling which comes of putting one's affairs into the hands of somebody whom one likes.

As for their theory of business, I have many times heard Shafîg protest: "What we (meaning himself) want, O my brother, is a little increase. We buy goods, and if we can sell them with a little advantage we are greatly pleased. We do not understand the taking of other people's property. That is unlawful. We do not profit very much, but we take nothing save the lawful. And Allah Most High helps those who follow the straight path."

VII

THE FAST OF RAMADHÂN

"HAD I but two hundred or three hundred guineas," said Shafîg, between the whiffs of his shîsha, "I could profit much from slaves. I know a place of slaves."

"Where is that?" I enquired.

"Above from El Gunfuda;" he replied, "on the coast of the sea between Birk and El Hodayda, to the south."

I was sitting with the cronies in Abdurrahmân's mag'od. It was near the hour of the midday prayer, and without the iron-barred window the narrow lane was vivid with burning sunlight. But in this bottom room of the tall house the air was cool and dank. A dingy air-shaft, a foot in width, ran up to the roof, and iron gratings opened into it on every landing of the dark stairway.

"And those slaves—are they Yemenîs or Habashîs?"* asked Abdul Fattâh.

"Yemenîs," replied Shafîg. "They are said to be children stolen from their parents in the inner wilderness of the Yemen. And Allah is More Knowing. There are Habashîs also."

"But when they bring the Habashîs from Africa, O my uncle," I said, "do they land them at El Gunfuda?"

"No!" said he. "They land them more to southward near El Hodayda; for there the distance between

* Abyssinians.

Arabia and Africa is not great. Their desire is to pass the sea quickly."

"They say that some of the people of the Yemen sell their own children," said Hasan.

"I take refuge in God!" exclaimed Shafîg. "But there are people who own men-slaves and women-slaves; so they let them breed, in order that they may profit by selling the children."

"Like the cattle!" I said. "In Egypt and in Syria slavery has ceased. It is unlawful with them, as is known to you. Tell me—if a slave is dissatisfied with his lot, is it not his right to demand to be sold to another master?"

"Listen, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Abdurrahmân with his ever-ready urbanity and desire to impart information. The Arabs are always prepared to teach and instruct, however meagre their knowledge of the subject in hand may be. They are a race of born teachers. It is no wonder that they carried their religion over half the world in a single century, and had it so readily accepted. The sword was the least effective of their means of proselytism. Whenever the desert men forgot their loot-lust and laid aside their swords, giving place to the doctors of religion, then it was that Islâm made its amazing progress. Christian, Jewish, Magian, Hindu, idolatrous, and other communities, under the threat of the sword, elected to pay tribute to the Islamic State and to continue in their own religion. But many of them eagerly embraced the religion of Muhammad when once the ignorant nomad gave place to the scholar and the teacher. He who rails at the "religion of the sword" rails at a myth.

"Listen, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Abdurrahmân. "In the days of the Turks, there was a slave-girl—the pro-

perty of Muhammad Nûr, O Gathering—who, on a certain day, went and sat on the steps of the Hamîdîya after el'asr. Nobody took any notice of her, and Muhammad Râtib, the Turkish Director of Public Security, went out to pray the sunset prayer in the Haram, without observing her. He did not return to the Hamîdîya after prayers; and having sat on the steps until el 'eshâ, the slave-girl crept inside. The sergeant of police asked her what she wanted. She told him that she belonged to Muhammad Nûr, and that her mistress had beaten her. As I tell you, O Gathering! Now when she complained to her master, he beat her also. Thus she said. So when Muhammad Nûr beat her she told him that she was not happy in his house, and asked him to send her to the slave-market. Then he beat her again, so she ran out of the house. And now, she said to the sergeant, she feared to return. They told her to sleep on a bench in the Hamîdîya that night; and in the morning when Muhammad Râtib came, they informed him of the matter. At once he sent for Muhammad Nûr, and when he had satisfied himself that the right was with the slave-girl, he called in a dallâl and handed her over to him to be sold, in accordance with her desire."

"But the money?" said Hasan. "Did not Muhammad Nûr receive the money for her?"

"Ay, yes!" replied Abdurrhamân. "He received the money naturally. Or perchance the police took something of it. That we know not. Allah is More Knowing!"

"The Turks lived by embezzlement," said Amm Yûsef. "In their day, you could not get your right, save by bribery."

The adân had sounded during the latter part of

this conversation. As Amm Yûsef made an end, we rose, and having hastily performed the wudhû ablution, passed out of the house and went through the dark passage-ways which led to the Dâûdîya gate of the Haram.

A lunar year had nearly passed over me in the Island of the Arabs, and the fasting-month of Ramadhân was at hand. In the Korân, Chapter *The Cow*, it is written:

> "O ye who believe! Unto you fasting has been ordained, even as it was ordained unto those before you, that ye may become godly. . . . [Ye shall fast throughout] the month of Ramadhân in which the Korân was sent down—as a guidance to men, and clear proofs of [this] guidance, and of the distinction between good and evil. Therefore he who is present [in his own town] in this month, let him fast during the same. But he who is sick, or on a journey [let him fast an equal] number of other days. In this, God desires ease for you. He would not that you should suffer travail. That ye may fulfil the number [of days] and magnify God that He has guided you: and that ye may give thanks."

In the Mekkan newspaper "Umm el Kura," a notice to the following effect had been inserted by request of the Chief Câdi:—

"Let all the dwellers in Mekka the Honoured and her neighbourhood be alert to descry the new moon of the blessed month of Ramadhân on Monday night next ensuing. Whoever sees it is requested to hasten to the Supreme Law Court in Mekka and give notice thereof."

In due course, "one spied the little crescent all

were seeking," and the commencement of the month-long fast was proclaimed. It was the 15th of March, 1926, and already the summer heat was upon us. The red blossoms which for several weeks had covered the solitary lote trees which stand in some of the courtyards of Mekka had not yet fallen. These scattered trees are the only vegetation found in the Holy City, with the exception of a few clumps of tamarisk. They stand in the walled courtyards of some of the houses, and several of them are of a magnificent size. The tree is always green, and soon after the rains it puts forth new shoots of a more delicate tint. In March it blossoms, and three months later the little round nabg fruits are falling from its branches. In the courtyard of an old hospice, called Ed-Dâûdîya, there grew a fine specimen of this tree, which I could look at from my window. It seemed to me a thing of rare beauty and luxuriance, and out of its thick foliage came the joyous chirping of myriads of sparrows.

Now life in the old city took on a different aspect. Every night at about the hour of half-past eight by Arabic time (2.30 a.m.), in the darkness before dawn, a gun was fired from the Fort of Jiyâd. This gave notice of the arrival of the hour of the "sahûr," the meal before dawn. Two hours later, the gun was fired a second time, giving notice of the "imsâk," the abstention. During those two hours, the sleepy Muslimîn rose from their beds and despatched the last meal which they might eat before the ensuing sunset. At this early hour the Mekkans commonly ate the cold rice and meat left at the evening meal, followed by dates and finjâns of tea. The moment the second gun-shot is heard, those who have not finished eating, quickly swallow the last mouthfuls. They then mentally declare

their "intention" of fasting during the ensuing daylight hours. No religious rite is of any value among the Muhammadans unless it is preceded by this "intention."

Those who have eaten their sahûr meal soon after the first gun-shot will either lie down to sleep again until the hour of the dawn prayer (about 4.45 a.m.) or sit to read the Korân aloud. After praying the dawn prayer in the Haram, the Mekkans return to their houses, and enter their private apartments to sleep. The more religious among them read aloud a thirtieth part of the Korân every morning during Ramadhân, and thus go completely through the Book during the month. Some read as much as a quarter of the volume every day—reading the whole some seven times during the month. A person walking in the lanes of Mekka on a Ramadhân morning hears voices chanting the Korân in nearly every house. Many do their chanting in the cloisters of the Haram. Thus, with sleeping and reading and praying, the Muslims spend the long slow hours until sunset.

During Ramadhân, Mekka is usually somewhat crowded with pilgrims, as many foreigners like to arrive in the Sacred City in time to spend the fasting month there. They perform the rites of the Hajj two months later.

At the hour of el'asr a number of shaykhs are usually to be seen sitting in the Haram delivering theological lectures. Some of these are Mekkans, while others are pilgrims from the Arabic border countries. They perform this voluntary work of preaching in order that they may benefit by the peculiar blessing which is believed to come to one who does good deeds in this, the most holy spot on earth.

As the hour of sunset approaches, the Mosque becomes ever more crowded, until the pavement beneath the cloisters is almost completely covered with turbaned figures sitting cross-legged on their prayer mats. Many chant the Korân in an undertone, swaying their bodies from side to side; others sit talking among themselves, or staring at the Kaaba. Most of them have a small bundle of dates and bread, tied in a handkerchief. Here the famished multitude sits, patiently waiting for sunset. At last the gun booms out from the hill-top of Jiyâd. Instantly a buzzing murmur is heard all over the great quadrangle, of many voices giving praise to God. The handkerchiefs of food, the knots of which have already been loosened, are now spread open; and repeating the brief Muslim word of grace, the ravenous fasters eat a few dates or a piece of bread. Those who have food, gently invite others who sit near them to partake of their fragmentary repast. Thus I was usually supplied with a draught of Zemzem water, a morsel of bread, and a few dates by Sayyid Hasan the Zemzemi.

While the members of the assembled multitude are thus relieving their hunger, the muaddins in the minarets are already chanting forth the adân for the sunset prayer. Now all rise, wiping their lips, to perform their devotions. Prayers being over, they quickly disperse to their houses.

At no time have I seen the Haram so deserted as during the first hour following the sunset prayer in Ramadhân. Only a few ragged dervishes remain, such as carry their every possession with them. Sitting on now in the Mosque, they break their fast with the wretched fragments of food which have been bestowed in alms upon them.

Returning to his house after prayers, the Mekkan eats plentifully of a white soup, of wheat boiled in meat broth. This is followed, after an interval of half-an-hour, by the usual dinner-dishes of meat, rice, and vegetables. At this meal, the principal one of the Ramadhân day, the Mekkan sits for perhaps an hour—eating, drinking tea, and smoking. Later on, he will sit with his cronies until midnight, with an interval for the purpose of performing the 'eshâ prayer in the Haram. Those of a more religious order say long supererogatory prayers during the nights of the second half of this month. Many of the Mekkans remain awake, praying or amusing themselves, until the sahûr gun is fired.

Frequently, accompanied by Abd esh-Shukûr, or alone, I visited acquaintances among the sharîfs and religious shaykhs, after the Ramadhân dinner. At their houses I drank finjans of coffee and exchanged compliments and political gossip. After that I would usually return to our company in the mag'od, where the conversation, if less polite, was more interesting.

One night Shafîg began to speak of his forthcoming journey to the Yemen, where he would sell town wares, or barter them for dukhn grain.

"I must buy samn for the house," said he, thoughtfully. He meant—samn for the use of his wife and children during his absence.

"And tobacco!" said Sabri, slyly.

"Ay, Wallah, tobacco!" responded Shafîg, with a brief grin. His wife was for ever imbibing tobacco-smoke, as the cronies well knew by the frequency with which she sent her little son to the sûk to buy the weed for her shîsha.

"I had a female in the house once," said Uncle

Yûsef, reminiscently, "she died. . . . When I went travelling I used to say to her: 'Rice is with you. Samn is with you. Charcoal, wood, and oil are with you. Wheat is with you. All with you . . . in the house. That which you need beyond these is meat and fresh vegetables only. Here is money for meat and fresh vegetables!' And when I returned with the hâjjis, O Gathering!" continued the old gentleman, appreciatively, "she still had something left of the money. She had gained money from here and from there—from the neighbours—with her needle. But she died. God show her mercy! She was a good female."

"That is good!" commented Abdurrahmân.

"Known!" said old Yûsef. "Not indebted! Here a debt and there a debt; and people demanding the money of you when you return."

"Indebted!" chorused Abdurrahmân. "Debt to the grain-merchant. Debt for firewood. Debt to the chandler's shop. This is good!"

"Will you not marry one now, Uncle Yûsef, and you are as strong as a youth?" suggested Sabri. "Perchance you will find her equal, if Allah wills."

"Whom I have with me now in my house will suffice me," replied the old man, complacently stroking his beard. "But will you not find a girl for Hâjj Ahmad?"

"Hâjj Ahmad wants a slave-girl," said Abdurrahmân. "He does not wish to marry in Mekka."

They remembered my visit to the slave-market. I must have shown more interest on that occasion than I had intended.

"Marriage is better for thee, Hâjj Ahmad, "said Hasan. "We will bespeak my cousin for thee. She is among the most beautiful of girls, only her teeth are as the teeth of a she-camel."

Here the company laughed.

"How then could I leave her when I wish to travel, she being so beautiful?" I said.

"Take her with thee," said Hasan, "with all pleasure!"

Shafîg had been gazing through the iron bars of the window while he smoked his shîsha placidly. Now he suddenly cried out to somebody in the dark lane without: "Welcome, O my sir! Do us the favour! Enter!" and turning to the sitting company, he said: "My father has come!"

Looking through the iron bars of the inner partition, I saw by the dim light of the lamp a small white-bearded old man, hobbling carefully over the threshold into the entrance-hall. He wore a black jubba, a white turban, gold-rimmed spectacles, and an expression of severity.

The sitters rose as one man, while the old shaykh stumbled slowly up the stone steps leading to the mag'od. Abdurrahmân and Shafîg went forward, with smiling faces and solicitous bearing, to conduct him to the window-seat.

"Peace be upon you!" the old man said; and all present responded together.

Slowly he lowered himself on to the cushions, asking blessings the while upon those who were assisting him.

"Up, Abdul Fattâh, and fetch coffee. Delay not!" cried Abdurrahmân.

"No! Excess of kindness, this!" said the old man. "Give me to drink of water, and God bless you!"

Water was poured out to him from the clay water-bottle, and Abdul Fattah departed to fetch the coffee, as he was bidden.

Now all leaned forward to enquire as to the old man's

health, and to thank God for the safety of his return. For he had left the Sacred City when King Husayn fled before the onset of the Wahhâbîs. For over a year he had travelled in Syria and Egypt, living on the bounty of some of the many pilgrims whom he had conducted in the rites of the Hajj in former years. In the Muhammadan countries the Mekkans—"neighbours of Allah"—are much venerated, and they usually return from a journey abroad with far more money than they had when they set out.

"When I reached Port Said," said Muhammad el Harîrî—for that was the old man's name—"I asked a man in the street to direct me to a caravanserai without a bug or a flea in it."

The old man spoke in a loud hearty voice, and the cronies gave him their delighted attention. It was thus that he proceeded with his narrative:—

" 'Good!' " said the man to me. " 'The best for you is to go to the Shaykh el Ahmadi.' "

" I will go if God wills," I said to him. "Where is his house?"

"I thought El Ahmadi must be the shaykh of a system,"* continued El Harîrî. The Shaykh el Ahmadi, said I to myself, must be a pious man and one who tolerates neither flea nor bug. O Muhammad el Harîrî, Allah has directed thee!"

"But when I reached the house and went inside, with the boy carrying my saddle-bags and my mat, I looked round at the place, and—what think you, O Gathering?—it was a wine shop!" cried the old man indignantly.

The sitters roared with laughter, and spluttered

* i.e. Shaykh of a religious system, a system of supererogatory devotions: that is to say, shaykh of a dervish order.

pious exclamations which were intended to express disgust. The old man was providing very good fun, seeing which, he allowed a faint smile to hover about his mouth for a moment. Then his face resumed its expression of indignation.

"I take refuge in God from Satan the Stoned!" cried Adburrahmân, endeavouring to control his mirth within the bounds of decorum.

"There is no power and no strength save in God!" said Abd esh-Shukûr.

"When I entered the inn," resumed the old man, "the owner of the place, the cursed one, said to me, 'Welcome! Come in! How is thy state, O Shaykh? Drink a little of this' . . . And, Wallah, O Gathering! he took up a bottle and would have poured out for me. But I said, 'What is this? Sherbet?'. . . The son of a dog laughed at that, and said, 'No, O my sir! Sherbet what? This is wine!' "

"Allah Akbar!" exclaimed Hasan. "Was he a Muslim?"

"Patience! Listen!" replied the old man. "I take refuge in God! He poured some of the unlawful into a glass and drank it. Wallah, O Gathering, I took my stick, and I said to him, 'Art thou a Muslim?'

" 'Ay, yes!' said the accursed one; and he laughed 'Yes! a Muslim!'

"I raised my stick in order to hit him, but he retreated; and still he laughed. Then I told the boy to carry my baggage to the mosque, and there I slept . . . And there is no power and no strength save in God—The High, The Tremendous!"

"I take refuge in God!" exclaimed the cronies in disgust, and finding the matter so serious their faces no longer showed amusement at the old man's tale.

"In Tanta,* I was sitting in the Fayyûmi's coffee-house," proceeded El Harîrî, "when a Muslim came in with a Jew. Then those two began to dispute in matters of religion; and, by and by, the Jew said, 'Abraham was a Jew!' "

"Allah Akbar!" cried the cronies in genuine horror. "I ask pardon of God"—because that their ears had heard such a wicked saying.

" 'Abraham a Jew! ' I shouted," continued the old man, while the company frowned and stared earnestly upon him. " 'You sit there in front of the Muslimîn and say that Abraham was a Jew! When the Book of Almighty God tells us plainly that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian!'†

"Said the unbeliever—'He was a Jew!'

"If it is not as I tell you, O Gathering, you may shave my beard!" proceeded El Harîrî to his frowning audience. "I said again to that hound, 'Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian.'

"Once more the unbeliever repeated, 'He was a Jew.'

"At that I rose up instantly, and raised my stick that I might thrash the accursed one, but the company withheld me."

"In those lands they speak with freedom," said Abdurrahmân, mildly.

"That, of a truth, is freedom," said the old man, "Allah curse the unbelievers!"

The cronies took up the old man's curse, and repeated it to and fro between them, while, looking

* A large town in lower Egypt.

† That is, Abraham was not by religion a Jew nor a Christian. The Korân implies that Abraham, having lived and died before the time of Moses and of Jesus Christ, could not have been a follower of their laws. (Chapter *The Cow.*).

round that circle of dusky faces, I saw a new light of a fanatical hatred flashing in their sombre eyes.

"In Tarablus of Syria," continued El Harîrî, after a pause, "I knocked at the door of a house and enquired for Hâmid the Baker, for I thought that was the place where he dwelt. Hâmid was one of my hâjjis in a former year, and I wanted to greet him. He would arrange my matter (i.e. food and lodging) in Tarablus . . . A man opened unto me, and I said to him, 'Peace be upon you! Is this the house of Hâmid?'

"Said the man, 'What Hâmid?'

" 'Hâmid the Baker,' I said to him.

" 'I know him not,' said he, 'What is the name of his wife?' "

In shocked tones, the sitters in the mag'od murmured, "I take refuge in God." With a shrug El Harîrî continued his narrative.

" 'The name of his wife!' I said to him, 'Do I know the name of another man's wife?'

" 'Well, then, what is the name of his daughter?' said that mannerless hound."

Again the cronies murmured their disapproval; while the old man looked aghast at the memory of the debased customs and practices which he had witnessed during his travels.

"What could I do?" he continued. "I left him. But what manners! Allah preserve us! In Egypt and Syria they take their customs, Wallah, from the Franks and the unbelievers. I am an old man,"* said he, touching his white beard, "but, Wallah, I was ashamed."

"What would you?" said Amm Yûsef. "Do they

* "Rajul ikhtiyâr," literally "a man of option": i.e. one upon whom old age had conferred the right to act as he pleases, regardless of the general custom. In the present instance it implies that having no longer any carnal need of women, by reason of his age,

not live always among the unbelievers and idolators! Wallah, I have seen, in Syria, people who touch their two shoulders with their right hands, and then touch the forehead and the breast. And when they do that they gaze up at the heavens. These are star-worshippers. Think you that a man can dwell among such as these, and not have his religion and faith ruined?"

"The world is changing," said Abdurrahmân, sympathetically.

"Changing!" exclaimed the old man, vehemently. "The world has gone to ruin. Look at children, in these days, how they deal with their parents! Almighty God commands us in His Book—'Say not to them "Fie!" nor controvert them; but speak to them kindly.'* Whereas now they call their parents 'dog' and 'cursed one,' and Allah commands them not to abuse them with so much as 'Fie!' "

Shafîg lowered his eyes deferentially as his father made these remarks, and the cronies shook their heads wisely.

"Have you any other news from Egypt, O my sir?" I asked. "Were you not in Tanta on the Prophet's birthday when a number of Egyptians were killed in the crowd?"

"Ha! The bridge!" cried he, "Wallah, I had been on the bridge myself but for the kindness of Allah. A great press of people were crossing the bridge, and a second crowd coming from the other side. Then the bridge collapsed, and two hundred people were killed. They say the Sultan or the King, or whatever he is, gave two thousand guineas to the families of the killed.

El Harîrî was at liberty to please himself as to whether he looked upon or discussed another man's wife, or not.

* In Chapter *The Night-Journey.*

Two thousand guineas, O Muslims! And when one Inkilîzi was killed, the Egyptian Government had to pay half a million guineas! See the state of the Muslimîn, brothers! The English placed guns and troops round about the Parliament-house. 'And,' said they, 'no member shall go out alive until you agree to pay the money, O Egyptians!' "

In these highly coloured terms the old man referred to the fact that the British High Commissioner had taken a regiment of cavalry with him as an escort when he went to the Egyptian Parliament-house to propound the terms imposed by the British Government, after the assassination of the English Sirdar of the Egyptian Army in Cairo (1924).

"You have travelled much, O sir!" I said. "Do you not find that travel fatigues you?"

"Listen!" said he earnestly. "Do I go by myself? Is it by my own power that I travel?. . . . I go by the power of The One—The Conqueror."

"His praise and greatness!" exclaimed the company.

"They told me in Egypt," resumed the old man, "that there was nothing to eat in Mekka—nor bread, nor rice, nor meat. But I put my faith in God, and mounted the sea to Jidda. And when I arrived at Jidda I could find no rafîg. I searched for one, but found none. 'Good,' I said. 'Then I will put my leg, over the back of a camel, and leave the shugdufs.' So I put my trust in God, and came riding like a Bedouin!"

"Praise to God for your safe arrival!" we exclaimed in a hearty chorus. El Harîrî, having drunk his coffee, began to get up, the company rising as one man that they might assist him.

VIII

FINAL DEPARTURE FROM MEKKA

I HAD decided to journey to El Medina at the earliest suitable opportunity after my return from Et-Tâif. Now I heard in our Mag'od that a party of Medinans were leaving Mekka on deluls, bound for the Prophet's city. I asked Abdurrahmân to endeavour to arrange for me to go with them; and, accordingly, he brought two of them to our house on the following morning, in order that I might discuss with them the arrangements for my journey. They were muzowwirs—a class of men whose profession, in El Medîna, is similar to that of the mutawwifs in Mekka. The word "mutawwif" is derived from "tawâf," the circumambulating the Kaaba. No tawâf is performed in El Medîna, and consequently there are no mutawwifs there. The Muslim's object in making the journey to El Medîna is simply to "visit" the Prophets' tomb in the Great Mosque there. The guides in El Medîna are therefore termed, in the singular, "muzowwir", that is, "one who causes to visit" or "who takes another on a visit."

It was duly arranged that I should travel with this party, which numbered five persons exclusive of myself, and that they would procure a delul for me. The two muzowwirs then left us, promising to return and complete the arrangements for our departure as soon as they had secured the additional animal.

That afternoon, soon after the midday prayer, I was attacked by a violent fever, the first of its kind that

I had ever experienced. I was sitting alone in my room, reading a book, when quite suddenly I felt extremely sick and feverish. I lay down and covered myself with my quilt and blanket, but within an hour I was on the verge of delirium. Abdurrahmân came into the room, followed by Abdul Fattâh, and I dimly understood them to be asking me about my sickness. I was obsessed, however, by the idea or delusion that in speech lay imminent danger. Therefore I restricted my replies to mono-syllables. I must have been on the border-line between consciousness and delirium, as after the event I could never clearly recall what had happened, nor what I said. I was oppressed by intermittent harrowing obsessions and solacing visions. Sometimes I visualised, with a terrible intensity, the stony grave-yard of El Maala, with its broken tomb-stones flung by the Wahhâbîs into the grey sand and the dust of millions of departed hâjjis. Then I seemed to be in a room in a quiet and peaceful house. A soft breeze blew in at the open casement; while framed in that window was a beautiful picture of the spring-warmed countryside of Southern England. Lines of tall elm-tress were swaying in the wind, which blew across the green meadows at their feet—fluttering the gold and silver spangles which seemed to float in the hedged divisions of that green surface.

At other moments my present surroundings emerged clear-cut from the mists which obscured my understanding, and then I saw Abdurrahmân and his youth sitting cross-legged on the carpet beside me. It now seemed to me that their dusky faces were set in an expression of unusual gravity; but it was not the gravity of solicitude. At one moment I felt myself to be in full possession of my faculties, and I schemed with myself

and mentally said "I must be cunning, and must speak little," for in my obsession I feared to say things which might incriminate me with these watching fanatics—incriminate me falsely, perhaps, but none the less disastrously. Then, in the next moment I was looking upon the yawning Maala: there it was again before my horrified eyes—that space of burning earth which received the bodies of the Muslimîn, and causes them "to pass away into dust."

Again, the oppressive room in the mutawwif's house came into the field of my consciousness. I thought, if only I could climb to some mountain-top, and lie there among the winds which came out of Europe and Africa, I should be content to await my fate of life or death with tranquillity. Oh, the panting oppression of these close-packed crumbling houses!

Those two Mekkans sat watching me with a fatal stare. Now they uttered no further word, but sitting silently, they seemed to await, unmoved, my dissolution. After further moments, Abdurrahmân stretched out his hand, with a snake-like stealth and slowness, and took from the floor near my pillow, the key of a small tin box which I had recently purchased in the market-place. He knew that therein, besides books, I kept my money. Now, surreptitiously bestowing the key in the fold of his waist-band, he resumed his silent vigil. I felt then like some wretch who, overcome by exhaustion in the waterless marches of the wilderness, lies down to die, while a pair of ghastly vultures descend and perch on the ground beside him. But how much better was such a fate than to be shut in among these suffocating walls! Soon, these ominous watchers would close the outer door of my room; and then with

covetous eyes they would open my box and begin to examine its contents. That step taken, perhaps I might not live; even though my sickness was not of a fatal order. With a pang I realised that my pistol was in that same unlucky box, but a dagger which I had recently bought lay among some books in a niche or recess in the wall. This was scarcely more than a yard's distance from where I lay.

Still my companions sat silent; and it now seemed to my fever-disordered understanding that into the fixed expression of their watching eyes a new distrust and impatience had crept. I felt now that I lay in the direst captivity, manacled beyond hope of release. My companions, the friends of many months of fellowship, stood suddenly revealed as beings of an unknown and sinister world, between whom and me no sympathy could ever be. Yet there was a key which would unlock the hearts of my companions and bring them to my side—not with womanish pity, but with the sympathy of man to man in a supreme common aim. I knew that. I myself was in possession of that key, but I had lost the power to deliberately use it. I felt with peculiar certainty in that moment that, ultimately, in the world of men, a man must stand or fall alone. How long I lay pondering these matters I do not know, but I remember being clearly conscious at last that I could expect no succour from man. The horrible oppression of the closely-shuttered room in which I lay; the terror inspired by the thought of the maze of jealous Muhammadan walls stretching in every direction; the sight of the gloating purse-snatching ghouls at my bedside; the depression of spirit caused by hardships and fasting, combined to produce in my clouded mind the conviction that my last hour was rapidly approach-

ing. I realised that in the world of men I was alone, and I repeated these words:—*

"God! There is no god save He. The Living; The Self-existing. Slumber overcometh Him not, nor sleep. Whatsoever existeth in the wide heavens and in the earth belongs to Him. Who is he that may intercede with Him, save by His gracious permission? He knoweth that which is in the present, and that which is past; but they comprehend no jot of His knowledge, save that which He wills. His Great Throne over-shadows the limitless heavens and the earth; nor can their preservation distress Him, for He is The High, The Tremendous."

No sooner had I begun, than that look of strange earnestness instantly disappeared from the faces of my companions, giving place to an expression of eager delight. This, then, is the key to the locked door of the Muslim's heart. This is the passport to the innermost confines of the world of Islâm. I might at heart disagree with the Mekkans in some of their religious practices, but I worshipped the One God, as they did—The God whom Jews, Christians, and Muhammadans worship in common.† I had made my prayer with no

* This passage occurs in the Korân, near the end of Chapter *The Cow*, and is known as "The Throne Verse." In its original Arabic it possesses a quality of sublime majesty which can scarcely be conveyed in a translation; though, in the above, I have departed from my general rule of literal translation in endeavouring to attain that end.

† Stripped of the divine, or semi-divine, honours which are frequently accorded to, vainly protesting, prophets and saints in the several systems, the religion is one.

Says Thomas à Kempis: "Let not Moses speak unto me, nor any of the prophets; but rather do Thou speak, O Lord God, Inspirer and Enlightener of all the prophets: for Thou alone, without them, canst perfectly instruct me; but they without Thee can profit nothing."

hope or intention of softening my companions, but now they were my brothers and my servants. The sinister fact of my silence under affliction was now completely erased from their minds. They repeated the last great words of the Throne Verse with me, then:

"You are better, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Abdurrahmân, smiling. "You will come to health soon, if God wills."

Said Abdul Fattâh, leaning over and touching my hand, "God give you health! Why do you not drink tea, Hâjj Ahmad?"

"Although you break your fast, yet drink tea, Hâjj Ahmad!" urged Abdurrahmân. "You are ill, and Allah will condone it. . . . Will you drink?"

"I will drink, in shâ Allah," I replied.

"Up, O boy!" cried Abdurrahmân to the smiling youth. "Up, and make tea! And let you bring it quickly!"

Forthwith Abdul Fattâh arose and went upstairs in order to prepare the tea. Soon afterwards, he brought it down to me.

My mind was beginning to wander again by that time, but shortly after drinking the tea I broke out into a profuse perspiration. This brought me complete relief for some time. As night approached, however, I again became consumed with a violent fever. I therefore sent Abdul Fattâh to the Sultân's doctor, with a note asking to be supplied with quinine. He did not come to see me, at which fact I was glad, as most of the Mekkans are suspicious of Turkish medical science, and themselves never consult anybody but a religious shaykh when they are ill. The shaykh gives them a written charm, prescribes certain religious exercises, and perhaps directs them to procure some primitive herb or drug from the perfume-sellers in the sûk.

My former disquietude and caution now returned upon me. I felt that I was again passing from side to side of the border-line between consciousness and delirium, and again I was possessed with the haunting fear that I might speak some fatal word while not in possession of my mental powers. At the fall of night, therefore, when Abdurrahmân and Adbul Fattâh had retired to their part of the house, I cautiously rose and locked my door. Then, with that unquiet thought no longer disturbing me, I lay and talked to my shadow throughout the live-long night.

It seemed to me that I had become two persons who were closely in league one with the other. We two were engaged throughout the night in fighting some intangible enemy. We constantly spoke words of encouragement to one another during the conflict; but what it was we fought, and whether we fought with swords or schemes, I do not know. All was dim and unreal; but among the broken threads of thought, and speech, and imagined action, which crossed and recrossed one another in the woven experiences of that night, there was one shining strand which I constantly encountered with the utmost satisfaction. That was the fact that the door of the fortress which we defended was securely locked. In clearer moments I heard the monotonous plaintive crooning of a poor old woman and her little granddaughter in the ground floor of a house opposite. These two ground corn in a hand-mill for some of the neighbours, and thus earned a few meagre piastres.

At the break of dawn I felt that my brain, by an unperceived transition, had become calm and clear. The fever had completely left me, but I was as weak as a starving kitten. I had now lived the hard meagre

life of the Arabs for many months, and for the last two weeks I had starved out the sunlight hours with my companions.

It was with difficulty that I arose, and with faltering foot-steps reached the door of my room. This I unlocked. After a time Abdurrahmân came down, and enquired as to my state. He told me that he had hammered on the door at the hour of the sahûr in order to learn whether I intended to fast that day; as, if I would fast, then I must eat the sahûr meal. I decided that, as I was sick, I would avail myself of the Korânic dispensation until I grew stronger, and Abdurrahmân approved my decision. He then ostentatiously handed me the key of my box, saying that he had taken it for safe-keeping.

On each of the following three days, I experienced a mild return of the fever at midday, lasting until sunset. Thereafter I was no more troubled with it; but my strength was very slow to return. The thought to go down to Jidda and leave Arabia crossed my mind, but I could not bring myself to relinquish the project of visiting El Medîna.

Mekka was now filling rapidly with pilgrims. Nearly every day ships arrived at Jidda, coming from the Malay Islands, India, Egypt, and elsewhere, carrying thousands of hâjjis. In my now languid state I used to enjoy sitting in the cloisters of the Haram to watch the motley throng performing the tawâf—swirling like the ceaseless eddy of a whirlpool round and round and round the Kaaba. Every hour some fresh party of white-clad pilgrims came flocking into the Great Mosque—for caravans were constantly arriving from Jidda, from El Medîna, from the Yemen, and from the East. The cloisters on every side were permanently

crowded with a sitting multitude. The Matâf could scarcely contain the great thronging crowd which ceaselessly performed the tawâf.

Newly arrived pilgrims wore the ihrâm; while most of the others wore their ordinary clothes. A pilgrim who reaches the Haram limits some time before the Day of Pilgrimage, usually assumes the ihrâm with the "intention of 'Omra." Having, on arrival at Mekka, completed that rite, he discards the ihrâm. On the eve of the Day of 'Arafa he puts on the pilgrim garb anew, with the "intention of Hajj." Some of the pilgrims, by mistake or from pious motives, put on the ihrâm for the Hajj even though they reach the Holy City several months before it is due to take place. In such a case the hâjji must continue to wear the ihrâm, day and night, until he has completed the Hajj. The sacrifice of a sheep as an alms to the poor, however, will extricate him from that uncomfortable predicament until the eve of 'Arafa.

Watching the circumambulating crowd one morning I observed, among the press, an Egyptian effendi. He was dressed in a "faultless" blue European suit. His shirt, collar, handkerchief and socks were all of the same lavender shade. Over his socks he wore a pair of patent-leather dancing pumps;* and his bright red tarbûsh was set upon his head at a rakish angle. As he moved round the House, he occasionally glanced in a bored manner at a gold wrist-watch which he wore.

Overtaking this strutting dandy there came a sturdy little Malay man, dressed in nothing but a

* Many of the old and tender-footed Muslims wear slippers in the Mosque. For this purpose they keep a special pair of footwear, which they carry with them from their houses and put on before crossing the threshold of the Mosque.

sarong, and naked from the waist upwards. A tiny brown infant was tied on his bare back by means of another sarong, which acted as a sling, being passed over one of the man's shoulders and under the other. In his left hand he led another child—a wonder-eyed little girl some seven years of age. A woman, slight as a child, closely wrapped in the white sheet of the female hâjji, padded along close behind the Malay's right shoulder. Doubtless she was his wife. As this family group ranged, with hurrying strides, alongside the Egyptian, the little girl stumbled and fell, but not to the ground, for the Egyptian instantly bent down and grasped her firmly beneath the arms. Then, lifting her quite off her feet, he set her down again safely on the marble pavement. All this happened without any pause in the onward progress of the hâjjis, and without any commotion the Malay family and the Egyptian proceeded with their tawâf. The effendi smiled in a bored fashion to the Malay father; and the latter reciprocated with a bashful grin. They had no language in common. The shrouded Malay woman adjusted the little girl's coloured dress; the effendi glanced at his wrist-watch, and round they went towards the Black Stone. Yet these two unlike beings, after a few days, would pass on to 'Arafa, in appearance indistinguishable the one from the other, being clothed in the simple austerity of the ihrâm—even as they had entered Mekka a while before.

A very divine ordinance is this: that every man shall go, once in his lifetime, into the Presence of God at His appointed place, clad in such wise as to symbolise the fact that in His sight all men are alike, whatever their worldly stations may be. Said the Prophet "No Muslim can be better than another save by piety."

A party of Tartars, closely packed together like a flock of huge shaggy sheep, went by at the heels of their mutawwif, trying hard to repeat after him the words of the supplication. Their responses, however, were mere unintelligible grunts.

Many of the Malay women will not abandon their love of brilliantly coloured dress, even when clothed in the ihrâm. Instead of the plain white shroud, some of them wear a coloured one. I have seen pink, cerise, brown, fawn, and pale blue ihrâms; and others of a flowery wall-paper pattern. A woman wears her ordinary clothes underneath the pilgrim dress; and in Mekka all women, save only the most abjectly poor, wear stockings. The only classes of women whom I have seen bare-footed in Mekka are Bedouin women and Africans.

Numbers of the better-class women who happen to lodge at a distance from the Mosque, hire two-wheeled carts to carry them to and fro whenever they desire to visit the Haram. These carts are primitive wooden boxes on wheels, without springs. They are made with shutters, which can be opened or closed according as the ladies desire to remain veiled, or to uncover their faces, during the ride. They are drawn by horses, mules, or donkeys, indifferently.

The Mekkans are now busy to earn money of the hâjjis. Every shop in the market-place is open. Numbers of Syrian, Egyptian, and Indian merchants make the journey to Mekka every year at the season of the Pilgrimage. These bring merchandise with them, and renting a shop in the sûk they there display their goods to the sauntering hâjjis.

Every ihrâm-clad man who enters the Haram without a guide is accosted by mutawwifs. If he be so

destitute as to be unable to pay for guidance, then a mutawwif will conduct him in the tawâf and "running" without reward. Such an act is rarely done out of kindness. It is done in order to sustain the delusion that rites performed without the guidance of a mutawwif are valueless in the sight of Allah—for such is the impious contention advanced by the fraternity of guides for their own financial advantage. It is true that few new-comers can possibly be so familiar with Mekka, by hearsay or reading, as to be capable of performing the rites correctly by themselves, without making certain enquiries. Even learned Muhammadans employ mutawwifs on their first visit to the Holy City. But in Islamic teaching a pious intention is worth more in the sight of God than meticulous precision in performing acts of worship. That fact, however, has long since become obscured throughout the Muslim world. In the matter of providing lodgings, the mutawwifs are indispensable to the hâjjis; and that is the sole necessity which brought such a class into being.

Shafîg, whose hâjjis had not yet reached Mekka, would turn an honest penny while awaiting their arrival. Therefore he set up an enormous water-jar at the end of our lane, and borrowing ablution jars from the houses of Abdurrahmân, Sabri and other dwellers in our quarter, he distributed jars of water to the hâjjis who desired to perform their ablutions. He gave the water, he said, for the sake of the blessing (i.e. for the spiritual reward of doing a good deed). What he really meant was that he preferred to leave the amount of his recompense to the hâjji's generosity or ignorance. If a Bedouin would know the price before washing (the Bedouin come to town displays the caution of the English country yokel in a similar situation), then

Shafîg would tell him plainly that it was a farthing. Briskly Shafîg handed out the jars of water before the hours of prayer, for his stance was adjacent to the lane which led to the 'Omra Gate of the Great Mosque, and many were the hâjjis who flocked by that way to perform their devotions. The adân ended, the fasting man would return quickly to his house with a cheerful face, and hand the new-gained money to his wife. Then, putting on his short jacket or his jubba, he went to the Mosque to join the congregation.

Towards the end of Ramadhân, I became acquainted with one, Sayyid Abdul Fattâh, who was employed in the Law Court. This man possessed a house near the Bâb el Gutbi, and thither he invited me. In the hot noondays we would descend to an underground room beneath his house, and there on a spread carpet we sat to talk. The atmosphere in this cellar was many degrees cooler than in the rooms above, although an oil-lamp burnt there.

One day the Sayyid told me that there was an Englishman living in El Medîna five years before, for he himself had seen him. He was an old man, with a white beard reaching to his waist, and his skin was white. He spoke little Arabic, nor understood any other language known in El Medîna. He communicated with his neighbours largely by means of gestures. It was this old man's greatest delight to sit on in the Prophet's Mosque after prayers, and listen to some skilful chanter of the Korân. He was supposed to have come from India, and was known as Abdulla el Muslimâni. I thought this might be some half-caste Eurasian Muhammadan, but his title of El Muslimâni indicated that he was a convert to the Islamic faith, and not a Muslim born. I determined to make some

discreet enquiry concerning him when, in the course of my travels, I should be come to El Medîna.

The fast of Ramadhân coming to its famished end, several members of our coterie prepared feasts in their houses. These entertainments of the mutawwifs among themselves are of a very informal character. No pious exercises are indulged in, as is done among the more religious orders.

I took the opportunity of the advent of the Feast of Fast-breaking to invite our cronies to dinner. They were all delighted to come, and turned up *en masse* soon after sunrise, in order to assist in preparing the viands. Abdurrahmân opened one of the musty old rooms on a lower floor of the house, and there the preparations were made. Minced meat was made by scraping the joints with knives; and from the resulting pulp our genial helpers kneaded meat-balls, which they impaled in lines on long skewers. Vegetables were cut up, salads compounded, and kunâfa prepared. The last is a sweetmeat, compounded of vermicelli and sugar.

The adân for midday prayers sounded before we had finished these preparations, but nobody displayed the least inclination to go to prayers, until Uncle Yûsef, having mauled his final meat-ball, cried, "Up, O boys! Forget not prayer, if you would not lose the blessing of the occasion!"

After prayers we returned to our mutton. Abdurrahmân had sent his women up to the roof, so as to leave the kitchen untenanted. Sabri was, by his own account, the best cook in Mekka, and, accordingly, he and Abdurrahmân went upstairs to attend to the cooking. The other guests, forming a human chain, passed the raw material from hand to hand up the stairs.

By and by they brought down to my room great steaming dishes of boiled rice, smoking skewers of meat-balls, dishes of vegetables in gravy, and plates of salad, together with the kunâfa and a pile of bread discs. Having eaten this mass of provender, we sat back against the cushions, and began to discuss the all-important topic of the forthcoming Hajj. Presently the company joyously concentrated on that department of the subject which treats of unearned increment.

Said Sabri: "We were in El Medîna one year, I and my father—God show him mercy!—and it was only two weeks before the Hajj. We had three piastres between us—As I tell you, O Gathering! . . . three piastres, wallah! and with that we had to reach Mekka. It behoved us to travel without delay, lest the Hajj pass on us before we could arrive. After much trouble, my father found a Bedouin of his acquaintance, and he promised to mount us on baggage camels in his caravan, and we would pay him the money in Mekka. Good! . . . We reached Râbigh, and were starving. I went over to the large shop which is just below the Fort, in order to get a little flour for a piastre. When I entered I saw two Shâmîs, and they were buying eatables with money . . . I say with money, O boys! . . . They had arrived in a caravan before us. I was looking over the fish—the fish in Râbigh is sweet like sugar, O Gathering!—when I heard one of the Shâmîs tell Mabrûk, the owner of the shop, that he was from Homs. So I said to the Shâmîs, "Peace be upon you, O hâjjis! Are you from Homs?' "

"White upon you!" cried Hasan, and the company laughed uproariously. As their mirth subsided, Sabri rearranged his crossed legs and proceeded.

" 'And upon you be peace,' said the two hâjjis, 'Why do you ask this?' "

"I said to them, 'I ask it because my father is the mutawwif for all the hâjjis of Homs, and . . .' "

At that the full-fed merry company roared with laughter, and each flung his joke or his taunt at the smiling Sabri. He for his part, looked more like Henry VIII than ever, as he sat swelling with suppressed delight, and endeavouring to frown upon the company.

"O dog!" laughed Shafîg, "I will tell Ez-Zâwî."

"And Ez-Zâwî will slay thee," cried Hasan.

"Good! And after that . . .?" queried Abd esh-Shukûr.

"I said to them," proceeded Sabri, " 'My father, O brothers, is the mutawwif for all the hâjjis of Homs, and we heard that there were two hâjjis coming with this caravan which you came with, and so my father said to me, "Search among the hâjjis for our brethren from Homs, O my son!" So I searched, O Effendis! And, praise be to Allah, I have found you.' Thus I said to them, O Gathering! and, wallah, they were from Homs. See the grace of Allah! And we were near unto death!"

"Then they said to me," continued Sabri, " 'Our mutawwif is Mahmûd Ez-Zâwi.' So I said to them, 'That is the name of my father. He is sitting over there in the coffee-house. Will you honour us by drinking a finjân of coffee?' "

Again the cronies shrieked with laughter, and Sabri was obliged to pause. At last he was able to continue.

"Listen, O Gathering!" said he. "They came and saluted my father, and drank coffee. When they had finished the coffee, they said, 'We are in that caravân, and we start before sunset. We will ask for you in Mekka, if Allah wills.' "

"But my father said to them, 'We are responsible for you, and we are here to serve you, O hâjjis! It is our work to see that the hâjjis are comfortable and relieved of all distress, if it be the will of Allah. We will cook for you, and do all things necessary.' "

"That is, you spoke to them according to the custom of the mutawwifs," said Uncle Yûsef, removing the mouthpiece of his shîsha from his lips for a moment.

All laughed heartily at that, and, "White upon you, Amm Yûsef!" cried Hasan.

"And," proceeded Sabri, "my father went to the Bedouin leader of their caravan and told him that he was responsible for the two hâjjis, and that it behoved him to take their two camels and tie them behind our caravan. This we did, and so we took charge of their baggage. We found samn, and flour, and rice, and vegetables, and tea, and coffee, and sugar, and this and that. We just asked them for a mejîdi on account, in order to buy oil; and there we were—completely supplied. Provision from Allah!"

"But did not Ez-Zâwi claim his hâjjis when you reached Mekka?" asked Abdurrahmân. He and Shafîg, mutawwifs both, had joined in the general mirth with less than the general enthusiasm. Sabri was not a mutawwif but a Zemzemi, and had no right to take upon himself the conduct of hâjjis.

"Listen!" said Sabri. "When we reached Mekka we took them to our house; but Ez-Zâwi saw them in the Haram, and he claimed them. He came to our house, and said he would take us before Sayyidna for hâjji-stealing. So what could we do? We gave them up to him, but they gave us a little money on account of the guesting we had given them."

Then the mutawwifs began to speak about their

agents at Jidda. These agents meet the hâjjis as they come from the quarantine station, and arrange for their transportation to Mekka.

"It is getting hot in Jidda now," said Abdurrahmân. "In another month it will be like Jehannam."

"It is horrid in Jidda when the wind blows," said Hasan.

Said Yûsef, "There is no place so heavy on my heart as Jidda."

"Do you not like Jidda, Amm Yûsef?" I asked.

"I like it not at all," said he. "It is always filthy and full of bugs and lice, and in the time of the Hajj one may scarcely breathe there. Also it is narrow and confined, like a prison."

Presently, the talk turning to foreign matters, one named Abu Daud, a teacher in the Korân-school to which Shafîg sent his little son, told the company that he had heard but that morning from one arrived from Basra, that the Turks under Mustafa Kemâl had taken Mosul and Bagdad and were marching triumphantly on Basra. "Further," said he, "when the Turks have occupied El 'Irâk, it is their intention to take Damascus, and then to join hands with the Egyptians in order to crush the Wahhâbîs."

Such wild reports as this are rumoured every day among them.

At last the day of my leaving Mekka arrived. Abdurrahmân had arranged for me to travel to El Medîna with a party of Egyptian pilgrims. I was to occupy a shugduf with the leader of the party, one named Shaykh Imbârak. My provision—of bread, toasted hard like biscuit, rice, lentils, dates, goat-milk cheese, olives, tea and sugar, was all procured and packed in a small sack and two baskets. Abdul Fattâh had taken

my water-skin to the patcher to be repaired, and now it hung, full and sweating, from a nail outside my door.

Since my illness I had taken a secret dislike to the fat smiling mutawwif. Nevertheless, he had served me well in all the long months of my sojourn in the ancient city. It had been his custom to inform me when he thought the time had come for me to give him money. Whenever I delayed to do so, he would say simply "I want money to-day, Hâjj Ahmad." I had given him ten pounds after the Hajj, and had subsequently added to this sums which represented six guineas for each month of my stay. Now I gave him another five pounds.

In the presence of their hâjjis the mutawwifs often speak of the sums of money which their pilgrims in former years have given them. It may be, one will say, "You remember Fulân Bey who was with me in the past year, brother?"

"Ay, yes!" says he to whom this question is addressed. "He wore a white jubba, and sat every night in the Haram after the 'eshâ prayer reading the Korân."

"He!" cries the other. "God bless thee! It is he! . . . Good! When he was about to return to his own country after the Hajj, he gave me fifty guineas, brother. Wallah, O Gathering, fifty guineas!" and looking keenly but covertly at the faces of the hâjjis who sit before him, he will be impelled by their lack of enthusiasm, or exalted by their smiles of congratulation, to add "and his wife gave me twenty guineas."

"And this is but thy right," I would say, when Shafîg, or Yûsef, or another of our cronies was the speaker, "for living always here about the Kaaba, ye have become the neighbours of Allah," and I would repeat

the last line of the Chapter entitled *Curaysh*—"Let them then serve the Lord of this House, Who giveth them food against hunger, and protecteth them from fear." They themselves were never tired of qùoting a verse from Chapter *Ibrâhîm*. It narrates the story of Abraham making his supplication to God—

> "O Lord, verily I have caused some of my descendants to dwell in a barren valley, near Thy sanctified House, that they may continually raise up prayer. Cause Thou, therefore, some of the hearts of men to turn towards them with kindness, and bestow Thou provision of fruits upon them, that they may give thanks."

Were it not for the mutawwifs, the Pilgrimage could hardly be maintained from year to year, save only by the Arabs themselves, and by such dervishes as take pleasure in submitting themselves to extreme hardships. After the days of the Hajj, the Mekkans remain in their hot valley, keeping their houses in repair, arranging for supplies of food, and taking measures to ensure a proper supply of water for the next pilgrimage. They have no means of earning a living but by serving the hâjjis.

A bad trait in my companions was their indignation, which was obvious though suppressed, that anyone should give money to poor Malays and other sojourners in Mekka. The lot of these wretched people in the time of war was a hard one, for their remittances from their own countries, which were formerly sent by post or by the hands of new pilgrims, no longer reached them. The Mekkans considered that all bounty dispensed in their city was due to themselves alone, by divine right.

In normal circumstances, Abdurrahmân was a man of courtesy, affability, restraint and average good

sense; and in Mekka I might, had Providence not willed otherwise, have found myself among a far more unpleasant and dangerous crew. He had long since heard from one employed in the Hamîdîya that I was an Englishman; and upon his enquiring pointedly as to my nationality, I told him that it was so. His only comment was to give praise to Allah Who had guided me. I never suffered the least inquisition at any time in Mekka. I had regarded my journey so seriously from the moment I had begun to plan it, and had entered so thoroughly into the spirit of the life I was now living, that to all outward appearances I might have been a lifelong zealous Muslim. This mental adaptation was made all the more easy, not to say inevitable, by reason of the appeal of rightness which the simple architecture of the old mosques, the complete reverence of the Muslim form of worship, and the concentration of the worshippers in what they were about, addressed to me. Above all this, there was the supreme fact that I was a bigoted believer in the doctrine of the towhîd.*

Having eaten at midday, I descended with Abdurrahmân to the Haram an hour before el'asr. My host's shrouded wife and his slave-woman came down and held out their covered hands for me to grasp in farewell. Abd esh-Shukûr, assisted by his son and a porter, carried down my baggage. This they would take to the open space, known as Shaykh Mahmûd, at the western extremity of the Jarwal—for there the El Medîna caravans assemble.

Having performed the Towâf of Farewell, I left the Haram by the Bâb el Widâ' and proceeded, accompanied by Abdurrahmân, to Shaykh Mahmûd. Arrived

* Et-towhîd is the doctrine of the Unity of God: literally, the act of unifying or declaring to be one.

there, my companion introduced me to a portly grey-bearded Egyptian who was seated on a bench before a coffee-house. This was my rafîg, Shaykh Imbârak. With a word of greeting, I seated myself beside him to await events.

The plain in front of us was encumbered with a great restless press of groaning camels, yelling Bedouins, officious Mekkans, and sheepish hâjjis. Most of the camels had shugdufs mounted upon their saddles, and into these the hâjjis were mounting. Some of them placed a foot on the camel's neck, and climbed in over its withers. Others made use of a short ladder for the purpose of mounting. Frequently, unskilful pilgrims fell into the shugdufs too quickly, with the result that the whole contrivance overbalanced, so that the animal had to be again couched in order that its saddle might be re-adjusted. Confusion prevailed on all sides.

I had sat with the old shaykh watching this scene for half-an-hour, when Abdurrahmân beckoned to us from a distance. We rose, and collecting our light baggage, went to the spot where he waited with Abd esh-Shukûr. Our camel was ready, and forthwith we mounted into the shugduf. Another camel was tied behind ours, and others behind that, in a long chain. The mutawwif of my Egyptian companion handed up to us a jar of Zemzem water, bidding us drink. At last one of the Bedouin camel-drivers began to lead our animal slowly forward.

Abdurrahmân, Abd esh-Shukûr, and Abdul Fattâh ran alongside my camel, and each in turn, holding by the front of the shugduf with his left hand, held up his right in order to grasp mine.

"With safety!" they said, giving me friendly smiles. "God show me thy face in safety again!"

"In the keeping of God!" I replied. "God bless you. Peace be upon you."

"And upon you be peace, and the mercy of God, and His blessings," they replied.

The camels paced on further, and they dropped behind. That was the last I saw of them. And so, not without a pang, I passed from the strangest of all the cities of the world.

IX

MEKKA TO RÂBIGH

OUR slow train of camels passed on down the broad sandy way which leads westward from Shaykh Mahmûd. Close at our right hand was the long wall of 'Aun er-Rafîg's orchard. Half a mile distant from Shaykh Mahmûd, a low chain of hills, extending from the southward, approaches the mountain of Abi Lahab at the foot of which lies the walled orchard. Through a narrow gap between the two hills the track led westward.

Slowly our camels passed through the cleft, bringing us into the presence of the wide prospect beyond. In front of us a steep declivity descended into the plain of The Martyrs. Before we began to descend this, I looked back through the open shugduf for a last view of the straggling grey houses of the Jarwal, gilded now by the setting sun. Further back lay the slope of Jebel Hindi, crowned with the tall houses of the mutawwifs. In another moment we had descended into the plain, and looking back once more, I could no longer see any sign of the Holy City except a few rush huts perched upon the stony hill-top immediately above me.

The plain of The Martyrs stretched before us, with the great well, Bîr el Bint, lying nearly half-way between its eastern and its western limits. The plain was silent and deserted but for the long lines of laden camels which paced westward under the foot-hills of its northern side. No trace now remained of the great host of

Wahhâbîs who had made this place their camping-ground during the long months of the Hijâz war.

Coming to the western hills, we stumbled up a rocky slope at the top of which were a few old ramshackle coffee-houses. Here the caravans were halted, in order that the officers of the Government might inspect the receipts for duty paid in Mekka on every camel leaving the Holy City. The dues amounted to somewhat more than four pounds sterling on every camel bearing a shugduf, bound for El Medîna. The owner of the animal received a further four pounds for its hire, making the total expense eight pounds, or four pounds to be paid by each pilgrim. In addition to this it is the custom for passengers to supply a certain amount of food to the drivers of their camels during the ten days' journey, and to give them a small present of money on its conclusion.

An hour and a half after leaving Shaykh Mahmûd we came to El 'Omra. Here the hâjjis dismounted in order to pray the sunset prayer within the limits of the Haram for the last time. After the formal prayers, they raised their hands palms upward before them, and made supplication to God for a "safe journey to the City of His Prophet, and a speedy return to His Holy House." From this elevated ground some of the houses of Mekka are said to be visible, but I could distinguish no sign of them as I stood peering into the falling dusk. Some of my Egyptian companions addressed the City, exclaiming, "O City of Allah! O best of the Cities of the Earth! May Allah return us to thee in safety!" It was well for them that no passing Wahhâbî zealot chanced to hear them thus rendering a sort of homage to other than God.

Proceeding further, through valleys which wound

among chains of low hills, we came at the hour of el 'eshâ to Sayyida Maymûna. This place is named after one of the Prophet's wives who is said to lie buried here. A small mosque at the left-hand side of the way marks the place of the tomb. A dome which surmounted the latter had been recently destroyed by the Wahhâbîs.

Having full water-skins from Mekka, we passed by this place without stopping. The air of the April night was cool, and riding in a north-westerly direction we frequently felt the fresh breeze blowing in our faces as we came to turns in the hill-walled valley. I drew in great breaths of the pure air, and it seemed to me, after being so long submerged in the stagnant atmosphere of the Mekkan valley, as though I were drinking cool draughts of some delicious spring. Behind us the moon of the eleventh night of Shawâl climbed slowly higher in the glittering sky.

Shaykh Imbârak sat cross-legged in his side of the shugduf, repeatedly telling his beads to the words, "O God, send blessings upon our Lord Muhammad, and upon his family and his companions, and give them peace!" Presently I fell into a state of somnolence.

Some two hours before dawn we halted, and looking ahead I saw dimly a far-stretching narrow belt of palm-trees extending across our line of march. In the clear starlight I could see that the ground under these palm-trees was black with cultivation. This was the fertile debouchure of the Wâdi Fâtma. The creaking of well-tackle and the hiss of pouring water came intermittently out of the gloom. The hills through which we had been travelling since leaving the plain of The Martyrs had now receded to right and left, leaving before us a broad sandy bottom in which lay the oasis.

We couched our camels in the sand, and untying the ropes, we lifted the shugdufs in turn from the animals' backs—four men to each shugduf—and bore them to a little distance, where they remained standing upright on their struts, like small tents or covered beds raised two feet from the ground.

Shaykh Imbârak and I, assisted by two of his Egyptian fellow-travellers, had just settled our shugduf in position when we heard angry curses mixed with the sound of "kh-kh-kh" rapidly repeated. Turning, we saw our camel-driver, Hasan, holding on to the end of a rope which was attached to the halter of a young half-broken she-camel which the leader of the caravan had purchased in Mekka. Hasan, holding the end of the rope, was some six or eight feet away from the animal's head. He made no attempt to shorten that distance and thus regain control, but ran along with the bolting camel, excitedly cursing its father and mother. The frightened animal quickly gathered speed and disappeared into the darkness northward, dragging Hasan along somewhere in the region of its tail. On the back of that beast were my saddle-bags. The animal carried no load, and the bags had been flung over its hump. Doubtless, I reflected, they would soon be flung off, and how then might I expect to see them again?

Hasan returned at sunrise. He had been obliged to let go his hold on the halter almost as soon as the animal bolted, and since then he had been vainly searching for camel and saddle-bags.

Spreading our carpets on the sand, we seated ourselves and prepared to break our fast. I had some cheese, olives, and dates in the shugduf, and Shaykh Imbârak supplied me with bread and a cup of coffee.

My bread and other articles of food were in my vanished saddle-bags.

The good shaykh would obey the Prophet's injunction to do good works while on pilgrimage. Every begging African or destitute dervish who approached with oustretched gourd or hand received a morsel of Shaykh Imbârak's breakfast.

Hasan, having eaten, went to seek Husayn, who was the mukowwim, or leader, of our caravan. Soon they were seen coming towards us—Hasan, Husayn, and the latter's chief assistant, one Atîya.

Gravely Husayn gave us the word of peace, which we returned again, inviting him to be seated. Drawing his abaya together, he dropped cross-legged on our carpet, followed by Atîya and Hasan.

Although a small and slight man, Husayn wore a becoming air of great dignity. His beard was white, but his dark eyes were sharp and shrewd. Slowly he drew his tobacco-bag from the pocket of his thawb and began to fill the little clay bowl of his pipe. The stem of this pipe was nearly two feet in length, and was made from an unpared cherry-stick fitted with a mouthpiece of amber. Shaykh Imbârak poured out coffee to the company.

"How found you the night's journey?" asked Husayn. "Restful, in shâ Allah."

We assured him that we had travelled comfortably.

Having given praise to God on that assurance, he enquired of Hasan concerning the direction taken by the runaway nâga; and then, turning to me, he enquired, "And as to thy saddle-bags. Is there money in them? What is their value?"

"There is no money in them," I assured him. "But in them are valuable books and clothes, and my pro-

vision of food." My money, note-books, camera and pistol I invariably carried about my person when on a journey.

"Good!" said he. "We will return them to you, in shâ Allah. They have not vanished. We will search for them."

He then spoke a few words in an undertone to Atîya, and forthwith the latter arose and left us.

After this conference I wandered away in order to explore the oasis. A few yards from the place of our encampment a stream of flowing water wound among green fields of birsîm. Beside its banks grew henna-bushes, and the tall columns of palm-trees rose at intervals out of the meadows. In several of the fields young grain and vegetables were growing, but at this season of the year the predominating crop was birsîm. Many wells were scattered about on the outskirts of the cultivation, and the water from a number of springs, being led into stone-lined channels, supplied a continuous stream. This oasis is generally referred to by the Arabs as El Wâdi.

Hundreds of Malays, whose caravans were encamped on the plain, were squatting along the banks of the rivulet busily bathing themselves in its waters. Coming from a country of tropical rains and great rivers, the Malays bear the Arabian lack of water less easily than the pilgrims of any other race. Newly arrived at the Wâdi, they flocked in hundreds to the banks of the stream, and throwing off all their clothes save the sarong, they dashed the cool water over themselves with their cupped hands or by means of tin cans. Many of the women threw off their clothes likewise, and, bare-breasted, enjoyed the luxury of a bath. The children splashed and gurgled in delight as their mothers poured water over their naked brown bodies.

I saw a number of Indians bathing also, but the Arabs and my Egyptian companions preferred to sit at coffee and cigarettes. When I rejoined Shaykh Imbârak in our encampment, he said "Look how the women of the Javans walk with uncovered faces, and bathe naked before the men! Their customs are beast-like, wallah!"

"Thus they are wont to do every day in their own country," I said. "They cannot support the lack of water. But I have seen Egyptian women bathing on the banks of the Nile as naked as these Malays."

"Ay, yes! But they cover their faces when a man approaches," replied he. "Not so, O Fâtma?"

A woman had approached—one whom I had not particularly noticed until now, though I knew that several women were travelling with my Egyptian companions. She was clearing away the remains of the shaykh's breakfast. "Ay, yes, sir!" she replied mildly to the old man's question, "Egyptian women walk not uncovered before men."

Nevertheless, my companions spoke their comments more in sorrow than in disgust. The Malays, splashing like ducks in the water, were so transparently happy and child-like that the Egyptians only deplored the lack of instruction which permitted such debased customs as that of women bathing before men to continue. Such seemed to be the tolerant view of my companions. Heaven knows what would have happened had Ibn Saûd allowed the Wahhâbîs the freedom of the pilgrim road!

When Hasan the camel-driver told us of the preposterous prices which Malays would pay for a girba of water "to wash themselves with, O Gathering!", and that many of them insisted on bathing from head

to foot every day of their journey on this road, they marvelled greatly that such people could be found who would give so much good money for water, when Allah allowed the ordained ablutions to be performed with sand instead of water in the desert.

As they finished bathing and washing their clothes, each Malay family, clad in clean garments, returned to their camping-place. The father, leading his little child by the hand, walked with the confident air of one who is pleased with himself. Walking a pace behind them, came his wife, adjusting and re-adjusting her brightly-coloured head-veil, and glancing about her with a child-like air of half-shy superiority or of timorous coquetry.

The Malay is a race which typifies a lazy bourgeoisie. It is difficult to believe that this nation produced very good pirates less than a century ago. Under British and Dutch rule the Malays have lapsed into childhood. This fact, though perhaps somewhat contemptible in the view of an observer, is not regarded as unattractive either by the people themselves or by their suzerains.

As the sun mounted higher, I became consumed with a sudden violent fever. I swallowed quinine pills, and lay in the shugduf, covered with my blanket. Presently I was attacked by vomiting. "Be not uneasy," said Shaykh Imbârak, "to be sick is good." I felt that I was exceedingly weak and faint, but out here on the open plain I suffered no depression of spirit such as had affected me in Mekka. A hot wind blew across the oasis, and the sun whitened all about us with clear light. I felt as care-free as though I lay in a nurse-tended bed in England. I felt that here in these open places nothing could hinder the beneficent

work of Nature. I said to my companion: "Of your favour, send for some milk, if there is any milk found here."

"Good!" replied the old man. But he made no movement—only continued to sit cross-legged opposite to me in his side of the shugduf. He was smoking an Egyptian cigarette in a long bone tube. He was obviously thinking hard. I lay and watched him dreamily for at least ten minutes. At the end of that time he slowly unfastened a basket which he had with him, and carefully and deliberately took therefrom a glass scent bottle containing a small quantity of colourless liquid. He then extracted from the basket a great loaf of sugar from which he hammered two small pieces, with the aid of a massive jack-knife and a large stone picked up from the ground. Removing the stopper of the scent-bottle, he next poured careful drops of the colourless liquid on the two pieces of sugar. Then replacing the stopper in the bottle, and the bottle in the basket, he handed the saturated sugar to me without saying a word. I took the medicine, saying "bismillah," and smelt it. The liquid was essence of peppermint. Having swallowed the medicine, I felt considerably better, though still feverish. The old man then sent one of his companions to endeavour to procure some milk. He presently returned with a small quantity, which upon being boiled assumed a yellow complexion and deposited hard lumps in the bottom of the vessel. Leaving the milk to dry up or otherwise eliminate itself, I asked the Egyptian to buy me some eggs. In this he was successful, and I spent the rest of the afternoon in absorbing raw egg with alternate draughts of water. By the time we moved off, at el 'asr, I felt much better; and the motion of the camel,

causing a constant current of air about me, added to my improvement. By nightfall the fever had subsided completely, or become very slight.

Our way lay across a scrub-covered plain, bordered by hills on either side. Now, as I lay in the swaying shugduf, a violent wind arose, tearing across the valley from the eastward. As the night darkened, rain began to fall, and the wind increased in fury. The Arabs halted their camels, which were shivering forlornly in the cold wind and rain.

That was a strange storm—unlit by lightning, and with no noise of thunder.

A tropic storm is generally a thing of ink-black clouds slowly creeping up the sky, their lower surges illuminated a ruddy bronze, while no stir of wind breaks the expectancy. Then, while Nature waits in tense silence, a jagged spear of fire pulses across the cloud-bank; imminence becomes a tangible thing, and bearing down upon the cowering breathless earth, it sends its voice in deafening thunder crashing across the world. In a moment the wind rises, not accelerating by stages, but instantly at gale speed. It bends the swaying palm-trees like hard-drawn bows, and all their dead fronds, which have hung lifeless for months, come swishing down to earth—as it were the feathered ends of huge arrows, broken off. In a moment more the world is deluged with torrents of rain, through which the continuous thunder cracks and reverberates and the lightning flashes ceaselessly.

Now, in this desert storm, thunder and lightning were absent, but the wind increased to hurricane speed, violently driving sheets of rain upon us, and wetting everything in the frail shugdufs. The litter which I occupied was on the side from which the wind

was blowing, and I felt it tilting upward to a dangerous angle. I shifted my weight to the outer edge in order to bring the contrivance into equilibrium, and the old shaykh climbed partly on the camel's hump between us. These precautions kept our shugduf from overturning. Several litters were indeed tilted right over by the wind, and the camels which bore them were thrown down.

The miserable animals now began to couch of their own accord, with the hâjjis still in the shugdufs. Then, dropping with bare feet on to the water-sodden ground we removed the litters from the backs of our beasts. This having been successfully accomplished, each man covered himself as best he could with his wet blanket, and prepared to pass the night in his shugduf. Hasan the camel-driver crawled beneath Shaykh Imbârak's litter for shelter. All this while the wind continued to blow with terrific violence, and the rain fell in torrents. Having settled myself in my wet litter, I fell asleep immediately, and awoke to find the sun shining over the eastern horizon. I had had an excellent night's rest, and though weak, I felt well.

Bright and warm was the early sunshine over the damp wilderness. I had no food of a sort which I felt inclined to eat, since I had lost my saddle-bags. I was therefore reduced to waiting like a dervish until somebody offered me a crust of bread and a finjân of tea "for Allah's sake." My companions were not lacking in Muhammadan hospitality, in so far as their poor provision allowed, and I did not go hungry.

The camels having been collected and loaded, we mounted and marched forward in the strong morning sunshine. Signs of last night's storm were visible on every hand, in the clean washed appearance of the

ground, and in the many tiny watercourses which wound their ways from the edges of the valley to its centre. No standing water remained anywhere on the face of the desert; all had been absorbed by that thirsty soil, but the whole of the far-stretching wilderness was shining with a new freshness.

As we advanced, the granite hills which bordered the plain continued to recede on either hand. The plain itself was a level expanse of sand, sparsely clothed with camel-grass, thorn-bushes, and a few acacia trees. Our group of camels formed a single link in a long broken chain of caravans which extended before and behind us, almost as far as the eye could see. Most of the pilgrims who travelled with us were Malays, but a number of Egyptians, Indians, Turks, and Bokhârans were included among them. The Malays were like children on a holiday. Flags of many colours—red green, blue, and yellow—were stuck into the tops of their shugdufs. As they journeyed onward, they ate water-melon and dates, and murmured their childish thoughts to one another in their soft Italian-like language. As sunset approached, they put on sarongs and bajus* of bright colours, and springing down to the ground, they walked along beside their camels joking gently together, or indulging in kitten-play, or trying to carry on a conversation with the Arabs. Wherever several of them walked together they went in single file, from force of habit, as they are constrained to do in the narrow trails which penetrate their native jungles. Compared with the hard-living self-careless Arabs, they seemed in all that they did, to be veritable little hedonists. They are naturally selfish, and human

* The baju is a loose blouse, resembling a surplice cut off short at the waist.

charity finds little place in their character. Coming to the evening encampment, they proceed to prepare their meal of boiled rice and the stinking "ikan kring"* which they love. They do not mix melted butter with their rice, for such is not the custom in their country. Now, having eaten their fill, they will offer the remainder of their dry rice to the Arab camel-drivers, and thereby satisfy their primitive consciences that they have discharged the obligation of hospitality. The Arabs will not touch butterless rice, unless in great extremity of hunger.

Far different was the case among my Egyptian companions. They were only poor fellahîn, but the Semitic humanity was in them. In their veins there still flowed the blood of that race which stands pre-eminent among the nations of the world for deeds of fantastic self-abnegation—the race which gave to the world, in Hâtim of the Tribe of Tayy, its greatest example of the quixotically generous. Regularly, Shaykh Imbârak ladled out a liberal portion of his rice and lentils seasoned with samn, and a piece of his meat if he had any, to Hasan the camel-driver. His poorer companions too, one of whom was so destitute of worldly goods that he was constrained to borrow of the good shaykh the money to pay for a sacrificial sheep with which to discharge a ritualistic penalty which he had incurred, never failed to call out to Hasan at meal-times, bidding him to "do them the favour." The Arabs who attended upon some of the Malay caravans made a practice of frequenting our manzil,† in the hope of receiving a morsel of food.

* Ikan kring (Malay)—dried fish. They bring stores of this viand with them from their islands.

† Manzil: alighting-place, or encampment.

At each alighting-place a number of poor Africans went the round of the hâjji-companies. Standing in their rags, they would hold out their gourds or their hands, with a silent appeal in their eyes. Thin and starved were these poor pilgrims, and they tramped every inch of the long desert way on their feet. A spoonful of rice, or a crust of wooden bread or biscuit, a few dates, or a piece of water-melon was handed to each of these. Or, if the pot were nearly empty, they were given to understand that a spoonful of rice was to be shared equally by two of them. This they comprehended, and departed in company in order to seek further bounty elsewhere.

Towards evening the hills began to close in upon us, and at sunset we reached 'Usfân, where we put down close to the well. The mountains, approaching from either hand, join together at 'Usfân, which place is encircled by them on all sides save the southern. The storm of the preceding night had fortunately changed our order of travel from the nocturnal to the daylight.

We had scarcely sat to drink coffee and prepare our meal when Husayn came towards us, carrying his long pipe majestically in his hand. Behind him followed another Bedouin bearing my saddle-bags. We rose to receive the mukowwim, and all being seated again, he asked me to inspect the contents of my bags to ascertain that all my property was still intact. The nâga, he told us, had been recaptured before the advent of the storm, but my saddle-bags were then no longer on her back. They had been found by another rider, lying on the ground in the rain. Slinging them over his saddle, he had brought them to 'Usfân. Husayn was urgent to learn whether their contents were intact. Having inspected them, I found that nothing was missing.

At 'Usfân I had my first opportunity of becoming acquainted with all the members of Shaykh Imbârak's party. They were seven in number: four men, including the shaykh, and three women. The men were tillers of the soil from the village of Anbâba in the Nile delta. They were dull of understanding, but their delight at being on their way to visit the tomb of their beloved Prophet showed them at their best and brightest. Two of the women were the respective wives of two of these peasants. They were coarse and ugly in appearance, being probably near the age of thirty. The third woman, whom I have already mentioned briefly in my account of the Wâdi, was the daughter of Shaykh Imbârak. Her name was Fâtma. Although a widow, she was still sufficiently young to be passably good-looking, but she was far too fat. At least I thought so, though her embonpoint made her all the more beautiful in Egyptian eyes. The Egyptian women diet themselves in order to become stout. One of their fattening foods is a coarse meal or flour which is largely composed of dried and crushed beetles.

Fâtma was my nurse when I was attacked by fever at the Wâdi. She hovered about me, arranging my pillow and awning, as I lay in the shugduf. She handed me the water-vessel when I wished to drink. She it was who boiled the milk which turned yellow and solid. Once I touched her unclean friendly little hand, and forgetting that the old man's eyes were upon us, would have taken it in mine. Shaykh Imbârak, removing his cigarette-holder from his mouth, said sharply, "Enough, O girl! Go!" And Fâtma, giving me a parting glance of her large dark eyes, drew her rusty head-veil over her face and walked away to her gossips at the opposite end of the line of shugdufs.

A Malay merchant had brought to Mekka several cases of tinned pineapple from Singapore. (Most of the pilgrims who have been to Mekka before have something to sell on subsequent visits.) I had purchased several tins of this fruit, and now whenever I opened a tin of it I called to Fâtma and gave her a piece. With this stuff I "filch'd the heart" of the old man's daughter, so that she cooked my rice with that of the shaykh her father, and cleaned my plate after the meal. Shaykh Imbârak himself distrusted tinned food, and he refused to eat of my pineapple.

Fâtma rode in a shugduf with the wife of one of the peasants. The third woman rode with her husband. As they rode, the women chanted gasîdas in honour of the Prophet. Fâtma's voice was as substantial as her person, and the grinning Bedouins from all the nearer caravans would muster delightedly alongside her camel to hear her sing her songs. She sang in a quavering emotional voice which sent the Arabs into ecstasies of joy, so that they cried out repeatedly, "Mâ shâ Allah! Again, O my Lady! Again, again!" At the end of every line they groaned out the last long note in their braying voices, and laughed and shrieked and clapped their hands in delight. Thereupon, becoming intoxicated with so much popularity, Fâtma would sing a wanton flesh-potly ditty of Egypt. The old shaykh, sitting quietly in his favourite attitude in the jerking shugduf, would interrupt his eternal supplication for blessings on the Prophet in order to chuckle at some old memory of his youth evoked by the sensuous song. At other times he would rebuke the women, particularly when all three of them were squawking and quavering different tunes at once.

Having slept comfortably through the night, we

prepared to remove from 'Usfân at sunrise. Our way led through a narrow passage between the encircling hills. Great boulders intercepted the track at intervals, and so narrow was the way that it would have been impossible for one camel to pass another. Up gradients and down declivities, the animals stumbled over the uneven surface. Half a score of dead camels lay scattered among the rocks by the wayside. These had bolted in terror during the storm of two nights ago, and had blindly buffeted themselves to death in the rocky broken ground. We heard that a Malay, riding on one of them, had been thrown and killed, while another had sustained a fractured arm.

The pass, which was perhaps a mile in length, rose to no great altitude. In several sloping places, the track had been roughly hewn into the form of steps. As our animals stumbled along the trench-like way, the shugdufs frequently came into contact with the rocks on either hand. At the top of the pass, a sabîl, or public water-tank, stands at the left-hand side of the track. This, said Hasan, was erected two hundred years ago at the charge of a Turkish pasha. It has not contained water within living memory, as the spring which once supplied it has long since dried up.

Descending the northern declivity, we came into a wide sandy plain which extended unbroken to the northern horizon. To eastward and to westward low chains of hills were visible for some distance.

Having marched all day across this plain, passing by the large village of Khulays, we came after nightfall to a village of rush huts, El Gudhayma. Here we remained until mid-afternoon on the following day. The villagers brought us poor dates and excellent water-melons. Their few palm-trees, situated to the

eastward of the great well for which the place is famous, were visible from the place of our encampment.

Leaving El Gudhayma at el 'asr, we marched all night across the level coastal plain, and reached the seaport town of Râbigh at dawn.

X

RÂBIGH TO EL MEDÎNA

THE town of Râbigh is surrounded by a narrow broken belt of low sand-dunes, beyond which extends the flint-strewn wilderness. It is a seaport of some importance, and during the Hijâz war it largely took the place of Jidda as the port of Mekka. Its principal buildings lie at a distance of three or four miles from the sea shore, where they are out of the reach of the waters of the Red Sea, which in rough weather are frequently forced up by the westerly wind until they inundate the low foreshore as far as the outskirts of the town.

The houses are built of mud bricks, and are scattered over the sand without any attempt at order. A small square fort, which was originally built by the Turks, now lies in ruins. To the southward of this fort is situated the market-place—a collection of open-fronted booths, resembling low cow-sheds, with walls of mud and roofs of rushes. A number of palm-trees flourish in the sand to north-westward of the town.

Many Bedouin women came about the shugdufs as soon as we had formed our encampment, and offered to sell us fans and baskets of plaited coloured grasses, linen money-bags, and other primitive articles which they spend much of their time in making. The shops in the market-place displayed the usual articles of food-stuffs. The hâjjis, particularly the Malays, were most

attracted to a vendor of fried fish, whose goods resembled small bream.

Râbigh is the meeting-place of two main caravan routes from El Medîna—the Darb el Far'i and the Darb es-Sultâni. The former of these strikes directly inland from Râbigh in a north-easterly direction. The latter, keeping close to the sea-shore, proceeds northward as far as Bîr esh-Shaykh, which lies at about halfway between Râbigh and Yanbu. At Bîr esh-Shaykh this road divides into three tracks, the most westerly of which continues along the coast to Yanbu, while the central one joins the Yanbu—El Medîna road at Badr, and the easterly one joins the same road at Bir Husâni, somewhat to the eastward of Badr. We travelled by the route Râbigh—Bîr esh-Shaykh—Bîr Husâni—El Medîna.

A traveller from Râbigh may reach El Medîna without passing through any of these intermediate places, for the tracks divide and sub-divide constantly. Nearly all the valleys which lie among the maze of hills and mountains which shut off El Medîna from the coastal plain are used at times by the caravaners. The Darb es-Sultâni thus consists of many tracks running parallel to one another, but completely shut off and separated by the intervening hills, until the latter sink and terminate. These tracks cross and re-cross one another, and frequently it is a mere accident whether a caravan travels by one track or by another. When the track bifurcates, it often depends upon the caprice of the leading camel as to whether the caravan takes the right-hand or the left-hand way, for, as often as not, the Bedouin who rides him is asleep at the time. All roads lead to El Medîna, and the traveller keeps on going until he arrives there. Many camels have the

good sense to stop as soon as they realise that the rider is asleep; and although the first point which the Bedouins take into account when selecting a camel to lead the caravan is the quality of senseless mechanical motion, yet few are the camels which never stop if left entirely to their own devices.

Our guide, Atîya, wished to pass through the village of El Hamra in order to visit his family of the Howâṣib, a section of the Harb tribe, who were encamped there. Instead of guiding the kâfila himself, however, he left that duty to Hasan, who duly slept at the critical moment. Atîya was also asleep, beside his couched delul somewhere in the desert behind us. We passed somewhat to the south of El Hamra, and Atîya was therefore obliged to leave us when we removed on the following day, in order to visit his people. He found his way among the maze of valleys, and rejoined us later, between El Hamra and El Medîna.

At midsummer greater care is exercised in this matter, as it then becomes imperative for the caravans to encamp at places where the wells still contain water. Also, one road is frequently chosen instead of another, in order that a scene of Bedouin strife, or a feared ambush may be circumvented.

At el 'asr, having laid in a stock of the magnificent water-melons which at this season of the year abound in all the villages on this road, we loaded again and moved off. Passing a few hundred yards over a flat sandy expanse, we came suddenly upon a swiftly-flowing river, from fifteen to twenty yards broad, which, coming out of the plain to eastward, wound hither and thither in the sand until it entered the sea immediately north of Râbigh. Untying their camels, the Arabs slowly led them, one by one, across the

stream, for the speed of the current was so rapid that without the utmost care the animals, with their unweildy loads, would have been carried off their feet. The average depth of the river was some two feet, but it had quite recently been more than twice that depth, as the marks on the banks plainly showed.

This stream was the result of the storm which we had encountered between the Wâdi and 'Usfân; and this great volume of water still continued to flow down from the hills, which were nearly invisible in the hazy distance eastward. In a few more days, unless more rain fell, the flow would cease completely and leave the watercourse dry.

Having crossed the river, we entered among groves of date-palms which extended for nearly a mile; and upon leaving these we came out upon a flinty plain on which small chains and isolated dunes of sand had been heaped by the wind. A dozen young Bedouin girls, possessed of a robust beauty, flung laughingly along the road on their way to the town. Some of them held out their black head-veils for contributions of bread from the hâjjis. One or two endeavoured to assume the whining air of the professional beggar, but their efforts were transparently hypocritical and hard to sustain. The others laughed frankly and cried out, "Welcome to the hâjjis!" "Give us bread, O hâjjis, and Allah reward you!"

The sun was now sinking to westward, turning the flints to glittering jewels on a field of gold. A fresh north-westerly breeze blew cool and strong from the sea. I had experienced no recurrence of my fever, and in this pure sea-air I was gaining strength hourly. The hardships of insufficient repose and food, which in the stifling confines of the town would have had a depres-

sing effect, had no such power here on the open plains. I was fortunate in making my journey before the summer heat had reached its height. Even as it was, travellers who passed us, going southward, complained of the heat. But travelling northward, we had the wind in our faces.

As we advanced I saw a strange figure hobbling among the scattered band of half-naked Africans who went on foot in front of us: short of stature, and slight, with legs clothed in an ancient pair of calico trousers into which were sown many patches of blue, pink, and yellow material. The head and shoulders were draped in an old and tattered black malâya, one corner of which hung down behind to the calves of the legs. The feet were wrapped in swathes of old rags, tied somehow about the insteps and ankles, which gave them a curiously large and ungainly appearance.

Then I saw this disreputable figure put out a small hand and arm, bare to the elbow, and touch one of the Africans on the shoulder, evidently asking for water. The African halted, and unhitching a tin can from his back, he removed the lid and handed the vessel to the ragged creature. The figure half-turned towards our moving caravan, and the head-covering fell to the shoulders. Looking at the uncovered face, I saw that it was that of a woman. She was old and, I think, feeble, though her shambling gait may have been mainly due to her unwieldy footwear. But now I looked only at her face, which seemed to me to possess great beauty. Her cheeks were sleek and smooth, of a rich brown tint, and above her forehead waved and straggled a mass of silver hair. She drank of the water in the poor man's tin, briefly and sparingly, and gently handed the vessel back to him. Her lips moved, and though I could not

hear her speech, I saw the benediction in her eyes, which were as clear and bright as those of a girl. The African took his tin carelessly, and replaced the lid. Then they turned and marched on again. The man soon out-paced and left her, and I saw that she was travelling alone in the desert way.

An Egyptian in the shugduf in front of us called to the old woman and handed her a piece of bread and some dates. These she received carefully as she pottered alongside the camel, and stowed them away in some recess among the folds of her ragged clothing. Her shambling gait looked painful, but I could not believe that it was so, because of the brave smile on her face. As our overtaking camel came abreast of her, my companion said, "Take, O my mother!" and held out a coin. She came nearer, and raised a hand to receive it, but the animal moved too fast for her, and so Shaykh Imbârak tossed the coin to the ground at her feet. She stopped and looked up at us with her strange smile before stooping to pick it up. Then I would have stopped our camel, that I might dismount and let her ride in my place; but as I changed my position in the shugduf I nearly overbalanced the contrivance, to the extreme alarm of the old shaykh. This caused apologies and laughter between us, and then we had passed onward . . . and there is something inevitable in the slow march of camels.

I looked out of the back of the shugduf, and there she was—shuffling along in her rags, a dozen yards in the rear. The smooth light brown of her face was brightened to a golden tint by the sunlight. Her uncovered hair was blown back by the wind. Occasionally her lips moved. Doubtless she was asking blessings on the Prophet. I do not know of what race she may

have been. There she was in the wild desert road to El Medîna—alone. Soon night would overtake us—the camels would pass from her—but she seemed to have no thought of danger.

The foot-hills of the eastern range now began to encroach more closely upon the plain, and the ground surface which we traversed became undulating. Marching all night we came before sunrise to Mastûra, which consists of a well and a few poor rush huts scattered on the sandy plain. Mastûra is known in history as Abwâ, and it is related that the Prophet's mother, Amina, died here; though she is said to lie buried in the Maala at Mekka.

As we sat in the fresh westerly breeze and prepared our breakfast, several Arabs came about us, offering to sell bundles of firewood and girbas of water. Others carried over their shoulders long sticks on which were strung collections of brilliantly-coloured fishes. One variety was marked with alternate stripes of bright yellow and Prussian blue, another was black-headed and red-flanked, and a third was of shining silver. One of the vendors carried a young shark, three feet long, the tail of which flapped against his calves as he walked. A Malay came to buy, and the Arab offered him the shark. The Malay laughed and said "This one eats men. How then shall I eat it?" But the Arab did not understand him. I said to the fish-seller "These Malays, they will not eat a shark. They are more knowing as to fish than you are yourself. Wallah, they are people of the sea, brother!" The land-tilling Egyptians looked on with earnest faces, listening in wonder; only Shaykh Imbârak smoked his cigarette and gave little nods of comprehension and agreement.

"Is it true that this fish eats mankind?" asked one of them.

I assured him that it was so, and Shaykh Imbârak said laconically, "Like a crocodile in the Nile."

"There is no power and no might, save in Allah!" exclaimed the peasant.

The fish-seller looked sharply at me, and then, grinning with a guilty air, he left us somewhat precipitately. I was doing his trade no good. When another approached, I purchased five little silvery perch at a halfpenny each. These I handed to Fâtma, bidding her to clean and cook them.

Removing again at mid-afternoon, we marched forward all night. We had rested well at Mastûra in the breeze-cooled plain; the moon was now flooding the silent wilderness with light; the caravaners were wakeful; Shaykh Imbârak became garrulous. He told me that he had been nine times to Mekka, and twice to El Medîna. I congratulated him.

"Formerly, Hâjj Ahmad," said he, "I had a wife in Mekka—a daughter of Mekka. Every year I went to Mekka in the Hajj, and she was there to receive me. She lived in her father's house, and I left money with her every year when I returned to Egypt."

"You were happy, in shâ Allah," I said.

"No!" said he, dogmatically. "She was a good woman, but Allah gave her no child. So I divorced her. And praise to God, first and last."

"One reads in the Egyptian newspapers that some of them desire to change the law, so that a man may take only one woman to wife," I said.

"Ha!" said he. "That is the work of those who busy themselves with politics. Among them are men whose thoughts are as the thoughts of the Christians,

and who imitate the customs of the people of Europe."

"They say that the Egyptians are not pleased at having the English in their country," I remarked. "What is your thought in that matter?"

"Listen!" said the old man. "The English are estimable people. Wallah, estimable! Each one knows his work and he works. As for the fellahîn, they like the English. If there be anything which you wish to have rectified, the Englishman will listen to you; and if he accepts your view, he will rectify the matter without a bribe."

Behind us Fâtma began to sing a chant about the Prophet, and the old man fell to telling his beads again, muttering his supplication.

Before sunrise, we passed through a wide flinty depression, and reached the well Bîr esh-Shaykh as the sun rose. Here the mountains closed in before us, and sent a low broken chain of hills westward towards the sea. Before these, the ground presented a level sandy surface which was marked by the remains of many cooking-fires and other signs of departed caravans.

Sometimes the hâjji company would hand the camel-drivers' portion of food to them, when hâjjis and camel drivers would eat apart, each with their friends. At other times they cried out to the Arabs, "Come, O Hasan! O Atîya! O Hâmid! Do us the favour!" and all would sit down to eat out of the dish together. If the hâjjis showed a disinclination to prepare food, the Bedouins would say, "Up, O lads, and cook! We want cooked food to-day. Wallah, our bellies are empty!" Rarely would they assist in the preparation of food. Having attended to their camels, they would sit and

watch with absorbed eyes the townsmen's careful cookery until bidden to eat.

This day, as we finished eating and sat waiting for Shaykh Imbârak to pour out tea, I asked Hasan concerning his history.

"Ah, hâjji," said he, "I am a child of Abyssinia, but I know nothing of the land of my birth. My mother was sold in Jidda when I was a baby, and I was still a baby when she died. So my master took me to El Medîna, and when I had grown to be a youth he sold me to Shaykh 'Amir of the Howâsib."

"Then who was your master in El Medîna? I asked.

"He was a merchant in the sûk: his shop was beside the Egyptian Gate," he said. "His name was Shâkir abu Zeyd. He sold cotton goods and cloth, but he did not prosper. He returned to the mercy of God."

"Verily we belong to God! And your master, Shaykh 'Amir? Did he set you free?" I asked.

"He is dead," said Hasan. "God's mercy upon him. Before he died, he said in front of witnesses, 'This walad, Hasan, is free for the sake of God,* from the hour of my death; and his woman, Mabsûta, is free with him.' So when he died I was free."

"And now," I said. "how do you live? Have you camels of your own?"

"No, wallah! I have nothing," said he, "save what Allah gives me in the way of provision. My brothers, these Howâsib, give me a few rîyâls in the days of the Hajj in return for this work with the caravans."

"May Allah increase it, and open upon you," I said. "And have you not a wife?"

"Neither wife nor child," said the poor man. "My

* Literally, "to the Face of Allah."

master, Shaykh 'Amir, gave me a slave-girl to wife; but she died after we were set free."

"Tell me," I said, "which is the better state, think you, to be a slave or to be a free man?"

"God is More Knowing," said he. "There is little difference between the two states. Perhaps I was somewhat more at ease in bondage, for then I belonged to the Howâsib, but now I have no people. I live among the Takârana in Mekka."

"Would you not like to go to El Habash?" I asked, "and you were born there."

"Never!" said Hasan. "That is a land of unbelievers and Nasâra."

"But," I said, "there are Muslimîn there also."

"Ay, yes," said he, "but here is the land of Allah, and we are all Muslimîn. So this is better, and let us praise Allah!"

A black little man he was, his face much pitted with old scars of small-pox. His crinkly hair was turning grey, and his forehead was heavily wrinkled. His clothing consisted of a dirty and ragged thawb, an old red kefîya and a hair-rope agâl, a torn and tattered abaya, and a pair of primitive sandals made of ráw camel-hide. He limped painfully as he walked beside his camels in the desert marches, for the thongs of his sandals were constantly breaking and the skin of his feet was worn thin on the long road from Mekka. "After we leave Bîr Husâni I will wear your sandals, Hâjj Ahmad," said he, "for the ground is hard and hot in those valleys."

"Good!" I replied. "When we reach Bîr Husâni you shall wear them."

"I will not wear them now," said he, as simply as a child. "I will not wear them now for fear they

should become ruined before we reach the stony ground."

We removed at mid-afternoon, and entering among the foot-hills, came, after six hours' march, to Bîr Husâni. Here we found several large caravans already encamped. One of these was going down to Mekka, after visiting the Prophet's City. The remainder were bound from Yanbu to El Medîna, by way of Badr which they had left that afternoon. The great concourse of men and camels here assembled made a continuous noise, as the former busied themselves with preparations for passing the night. Numerous cooking-fires blazed in all parts of the wide valley, and Arabs with small oil-lamps tied to the ends of sticks went hither and thither, guiding the incoming caravans to their couching-places. A row of stone hovels, in which articles of food were being sold, extended along the foot of the hill at the northern side of the valley.

We remained at Bîr Husâni until noon on the following day, when we again loaded and moved off. Our way now lay through sterile valleys, walled closely on either hand by overhanging mountains. In some of the higher ravines of these terrible rocks, said Hasan as he walked beneath us over the hot ground, there are running springs of water which nourish gardens of banana-trees, date-palms, and other fruit-trees. There also great stores of honey are collected and brought to El Medîna. The poor man's tales sounded fabulous, as we crawled like sun-dried insects among the black bases of those stupendous rock masses.

We were now cut off from the fresh breezes. The sun's rays seemed concentrated in the horrible depressions through which we stumbled. Contrasting our present state with that of the preceding days, it was

as though a great lens had been placed in position before the sun. A fortunate result of the Wahhâbî occupation was that the discomfort of our travelling was not increased by the obstruction of robber-bands, though petty pilferers abounded in the camping-places.

At length the sun set, and night closed upon us. We halted long enough to perform the sunset prayer, as our custom was, and then marched forward all night.

Before daybreak we descended into a narrow ravine, known as Khuls, where we halted. Among the stones at the foot of the southern mountain there was a well, and at this point the ravine was over a hundred yards in width. A row of stone hovels, in which a few wretched Bedouins dwelt, extended along its northern side. These Bedouins existed by selling firewood and camel-fodder to the passing pilgrims and Arabs, and some of them possessed a few goats. I found it impossible to procure milk anywhere in this district, although goats with full udders frequently wandered about our encampment. The Arabs never sell milk: they look upon the practice as being shameful. Milk may be freely given, but not sold. Among the Harb tribesmen it is seldom given away, at least to strangers, but the prejudice against selling it is none the less strong on that account. Even in Mekka and El Medîna the milk-sellers are exclusively Indians or other foreigners. In Wâdi Fâtma one of the Egyptians had got milk for me by first presenting some bread to the owner of a goat; but elsewhere I had found it impossible to obtain a supply by those or any other means.

For stifling heat, Khuls was the worst place at which I had yet encamped. Great hills of blackened granite shut in the stony valley on every side. No tuft of grass,

acacia tree nor thorn bush lived among those burning stones. Not a bird, beast, nor reptile moved there. Overhead the blue of the sky was obscured by the hard blaze of light which radiated from the white-hot furnace of the sun. The heat and the silence dazed the hâjjis as they lay close in the shugdufs. I had spread my blanket, carpet, and abaya on the framework of the tilt, but the heat which blazed upon them would not be withstood. Sometimes the hot silence in the valley seemed to give place to the shouting and clangour of a great host of armed men.

Soon after noon we again removed, and, marching through the interminable valleys, came in three hours to Bîr 'Abbâs. Here a hajj-road fort, built by the Turks, stood in ruins in the middle of a level expanse of stony ground. We passed by the well without stopping, and proceeded on our way .

Having marched ceaselessly throughout the night, we came at earliest dawn to a plain three or four miles in width, on which grew many acacia trees. This place is known as Bîr Darwîsh, or El Faraysh. A dry watercourse ran through it; and on the banks of this, camel-grass, thorn bushes, acacia trees, and mimosa bushes grew thickly, giving a pleasant sylvan appearance to the prospect. A large well yielded excellent water, and there were other wells the water of which was somewhat brackish. A half-ruined hajj-road fort was situated in the middle of the valley, and on a low spur of the western hill there were a few empty huts. The latter are used by pilgrims for the purpose of performing total ablution before they enter El Medîna. A number of poor Bedouin children came about us as we dismounted. "Welcome to Muhammad's visitors!" they said with a sad-sounding intonation in their clear

voices. They also cried, "Yâ helay!" repeatedly. Neither my companions nor I knew what they meant by that; and all Hasan could tell us about it was that it was a request for alms.

Unlike the Mekkan Pilgrimage, the visit to El Medîna is not obligatory. The veneration which the Muhammadans entertain for their Prophet, however, induces all who are able to bear the expense, and who are not deterred by the hardships and danger of the expedition, to perform it. The Wahhâbîs discourage the visit to El Medîna; but the Wahhâbî king, being unwilling to lose the handsome revenues which he derives from this source, endeavours to impress upon his followers that it is to pray in the mosque that he permits the hâjjis to go to El Medîna, and not to visit the Prophet's tomb.

The traditions which represent the Prophet as saying "He who visits my tomb will surely enjoy my intercession," and again "He who comes to me as a visitor, being induced thereto by no other motive than to visit me: it shall be binding upon me to become his intercessor on the Day of Resurrection," are not regarded as well authenticated by the puritans. The Muslims are commanded in the Korân to salute the Prophet, but it is unnecessary for them to visit his tomb for that purpose. Said Muhammad, "Allah has said that He will cause the blessings and salutations of those that are afar off to reach me." The puritans, however, are in a distinct minority, and the visit to El Medîna is generally regarded as one of the most pious and profitable deeds which a Muslim may voluntarily perform.

To the Muslims Muhammad is the best of all mankind, angels, and jinn; and is the greatest and the last of the messengers of God. Muhammad himself is re-

ported to have said "In the sight of Allah I am the most noble of those who have gone before and of those who come after; and in this is no boast."

After Muhammad, in order of precedence, come Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Noah, and the remainder of the prophets. These are followed by the chiefs of the angels—Gabriel, Michael, Isrâfîl, and Azrâil.* Next come the first four khalîfas—Abu Bakr, Omar, Othmân, and Ali. Then come twenty Companions of the Prophet, to whom he gave the good tidings that God had already marked them out for entry into Paradise. These are followed by the three hundred who fought at the battle of Badr, the thousand who fought at Ohod, and the remaining Companions. The best of women are Mary the mother of Jesus, Fâtma the Prophet's daughter, Khadîja his wife, and Aasiya the wife of Pharaoh, who believed in Moses—as is related in the Korân, Chapter *The Sovereignty*. Some authorities add a fifth perfect woman, Muhammad's favourite wife, 'Aisha.

The Egyptians, having broken their fast, set about bathing themselves in the stone huts. This done, they lay dozing in their shugdufs until noon, when the camel-men arose to prepare for the remove.

On leaving the valley of El Faraysh the road began to rise gradually. Sunset found us still ascending through valleys which were overgrown in places with thorn-bushes. Soon after nightfall, worn out with the fatigues of the eleven-days' journey from Mekka, I fell into a deep sleep.

* Gabriel is the messenger of revelation; Michael is charged with supplying the material needs of living creatures; Isrâfîl with the duty of sounding the trump on the Last Day; and Azrâil with that of taking the souls of men from their bodies when the pre-ordained moment of their death arrives.

The sun had not yet risen when I awoke. By the grey light of dawn I saw that the caravan was emerging from the mountains among which we had toiled for the last three days. We had breasted the top of the last rise, and below us we saw an open plain stretching away to the eastward. We passed by the small mosque of 'Urwa, and along a rocky way hewn in places into the form of rough steps. Several large white houses lay in a depression to the southward, and beyond these were dim plantations of trees. Directly ahead was an outlying stone wall, and the road led round a corner of this to a large gateway. Further to the right rose the massive ramparts of a fortified city wall, and suddenly I caught sight of four lofty minarets which overtopped a mass of houses within the wall: it was El Medîna!

"O Allah, bless our Lord Muhammad, and give him peace! Peace be upon thee, O Messenger of Allah! Allah bless and give thee peace, and thou art living in thy tomb!" Eager voices arose in all the caravan. Fâtma began to chant "O my beloved! O Muhammad!"

Slowly the beasts moved forward. To our left was a high wall; to our right a mass of black lava sloped down to a depression; at the end of the straight road in front of us stood the great western gate of the city, called Bâb el 'Anbarîya.

Now there came walking from the city gate a number of shaykhs clad in white turbans and long jubbas of various colours.

These, as they approached our caravan, uttered the salutation of peace, and asked, "Who are you, O hâjji? and whence come you?" They were muzowwirs, come to claim their pilgrims and conduct them to their houses. Learning that I was from Damascus, one

Aamir, a native of Algiers, gave me to understand that he would provide for my entertainment while I remained at El Medîna. This Moor had long been resident in the Prophet's City, whither he had been brought by his father when only five years old.

El Husayn, having shown his receipts for taxes paid in Mekka, the guard opened the gate to allow us to pass through.

I dismounted and walked with Aamir up the long straight road which led from the Bâb el 'Anbarîya to a large open space known as El Manâkha, the couching place. This space lies between the inner and outer walls of the city. It is half a mile long and some three hundred yards wide. From end to end it was closely packed with shugdufs, some of which were arranged in circles and others in straight lines. A few camels remained here and there, but most of the beasts had been led outside the wall after being unloaded. Passing through a narrow lane which had been left in the midst of the closely-packed shugdufs, we came to a gap in the inner wall. Through this we entered the city, and immediately there burst upon our view the beautiful sight of the Green Dome, beneath which lies the tomb of Muhammad. It rose above the high walls of the Great Mosque to half the height of the minarets, and its apex was adorned with a gilded ornament in the form of a series of metal spheres transfixed by a straight shaft and surmounted by a crescent. The golden ornament flashing in the newly-risen sun: the great dark-green dome beneath it: and the white minarets which rose about it, formed a picture of the most striking beauty and magnificence. Renewed cries of devotion and of salutation to the Prophet burst from the hâjjis.

We now found ourselves in a road some eight yards in width, which led between the houses in a south-easterly direction towards the Great Mosque. Halfway along this street, which is known as El 'Aynîya, we halted and couched our camels. Aamir called a boy to carry my saddle-bags; then, having given Hasan the camel-man a mejîdi, and having taken leave of my Egyptian companions, I went with the muzowwir to his house. This was situated in the market street known as Es-Sûk. Arrived there, my companion installed me in a small but clean room, furnished with grass-mats and cushions, at the top of the house.

"Welcome, Hâjj Ahmad!" said the Moor cordially, as he came again with finjâns of coffee. "Blessed be thy visit to the City of Allah's Messenger!"

XI

THE PROPHET'S TOMB

THE visitor to El Medîna is enjoined to perform the rites of visitation immediately upon arriving in the city. I therefore lost no time in performing ablutions and assuming my town dress—a white turban, linen thawb, and black cloth jubba. This done, I descended with Aamir to the street.

At the bottom of my host's house there was a small shop fronting on the market street. Here Aamir sat when not conducting hâjjis, and sold turban shawls, strings of beads, tiny red leather bags full of kohl, and other articles of dress and toilet. A connection of his, a one-eyed youth of stern demeanour named Saad, officiated in the shop whenever Aamir was engaged in his other duties. Saad constantly read the Korân, with the sacred book held in such a way that if he was reading in the left-hand page his eye was close to the right-hand page; while in order to read in the right-hand page, he seemed to give his earnest attention to his right knee or to his toes or some other object which happened to be placed at a distance of six inches to the right of the book.

The street was full of Malays, Egyptians, Bokhârans, Indians, Afghans and others, who slowly sauntered along the narrow way in either direction, looking at the goods displayed in the little shops. We passed down with the crowd towards the eastern end of the street. On approaching the Mosque, the street makes a slight

turn to the right, while on the left the shops terminate before a rectangular open space some eighty yards wide by twenty-five yards long. Here the uneven ground is covered with old dust of crumbled buildings, and over against the Great Mosque are several ruined walls of stone and mud—the remains of houses demolished by the Turks seventy years ago, when the Mosque was being rebuilt. This open space is called El Balât.

Rounding the bend in the street, we saw before us a lofty stone arch of semi-circular form, surmounted by a shallow dome, and forming the front of a porch with a floor-space some fifteen feet square. The apex of the arch was over thirty feet above the ground, but within the porch the domed ceiling rose considerably higher. The square pilasters of stone blocks forming the responds to the arch were surmounted by ornaments of an inverted scroll form, beneath which was a carved frieze of Korânic excerpts. The upper parts of the interior walls of the porch were decorated with painted designs. A smaller arched doorway, between twelve and fifteen feet high and eight feet wide, in the inner wall of the porch, opened into the Mosque. The arch of this doorway was filled by a grating of ornamental iron-work, and below this were fitted two massive wooden doors handsomely embellished with brass. The spandrels of the inner arch were adorned with carvings of an acanthus design. Four spherical glass lamp-bowls hung on chains depending from the vaulted ceiling. This structure forms the main gate of the Mosque. It is known as Bâb es-Salâm. The pious Muslim entering the Mosque for the first time invariably goes in at this gate. The great size of the porch, added to the general simplicity of its design, gives it an appear-

ance of grandeur, which is greatly marred, however, by the somewhat mean-looking buildings which invest it closely on either hand. These buildings were formerly used as schools, but at the time of my visit they had been in disuse for nearly two years. In front of the right-hand one was a stone water-tank fitted with taps, at which those who are about to enter the Mosque perform their ablutions, if they have not already done so elsewhere. Bâb es-Salâm is at the eastern termination of the market-street, which it completely blocks.

Mounting two steps, my companion and I entered the porch, and taking off our sandals we handed them to a door-keeper, who placed them on one of a series of small shelves which stood against the left-hand wall. Aamir then led the way towards the inner door, and halted on the threshold. "Clasp thy right-hand over thy left hand on thy breast; and enter with thy right foot," said he, placing his own hands one over the other on his breast. I imitated his example, and saying "In the Name of Allah: the Very Merciful; the Merciful," we entered. Thinking how few are the Europeans who have ever crossed that threshold, I was lost to my surroundings for a moment. The next thing I knew was that I was walking on a narrow carpet spread upon a marble floor, while two or three yards to my right rose a marble wall, far too thickly embellished along its whole length with gilded Korânic excerpts beautifully painted in the thuluthi script. To my left was a brass railing, three feet in height, which separated the broad passage-way down which I was walking from the remainder of the Mosque.

As we advanced, Aamir recited the following supplication, which I repeated after him:—

"O God, Thou art peace; and from Thee issues peace; and unto Thee peace returns. Then grant that we may live in peace, O Lord, and bring us into The Garden—Thy Dwelling and the Home of Peace. Blessed art Thou, O our Lord, and Most Exalted. O Thou Possessor of Majesty and Honour!"

Half-way across the Mosque we came to a marble pulpit on our left-hand, and a few paces further stood an isolated mihrâb. The latter was encased in slabs of white, black, red and green marble, arranged in elaborate patterns. It is known as Mihrâb en-Nabi—the Prophet's prayer-niche.

Turning to our left, we passed between the pulpit and the mihrâb, and entered a forest of massive stone columns. To our right, that is, to eastward, a beautiful screen of green-painted iron and brasswork, extending from floor to roof of the Mosque, was visible through the rows of columns. From its upper extremity, great curtains of dark-green silk hung in festoons, being caught up with brass chains or hooks. Unseen behind that screen lay the Prophet's tomb.

The space between the tomb chamber (El Hujra) and the pulpit is known as Er-Rawdhat el Mutahhara —the Purified Luxuriant Garden. Said the Prophet, "The space which lies between my chamber and my pulpit is a garden of the gardens of Paradise." This is the site of the original mosque which was built by the Prophet's command. Adjoining it stood 'Aisha's house, where now stands the tomb chamber; for Muhammad was buried in the house of his favourite wife. All the columns in this part of the Mosque are encased, up to a height of some ten feet, in a panelling of marble slabs, and are painted silver, green, red, yellow and white

in gaudy designs. Above the panelling the columns are painted a dull red or brown.

There is a barbaric quality in the decorations of the Mosque of El Medîna. It strikes the same note of crude sumptuousness as a grand vizier's palace in an Arabian Nights tale. The embellishments cannot be called tawdry, but they have been laid on with far too lavish a hand, and without discernment.

Turning about, we faced the mihrâb and performed the customary prayer of two prostrations in salutation of the mosque. Then, sitting cross-legged before the mihrâb, we raised our hands palms upward, and gave thanks to God for having enabled us safely to reach the tomb of His Prophet. This being completed, we rose and passed out of the Rawdha, walking through the space between the tomb-chamber and the mihrâb. This brought us again into the railed-off passage leading from Bâb es-Salâm to the tomb. Before us rose the high railing, partially draped with green curtains. In the railing itself, at a height of five feet from the ground, were three circular apertures in line, each large enough to admit a man's hand. The left-hand aperture is known as the Prophet's window; the second as the window of Abu Bakr; and the third as that of Omar; for, by 'Aisha's permission, the first two Khalîfas were also buried in the Prophet's tomb-chamber.

Now, standing opposite the Prophet's window, and facing the railing but not touching it, our backs being turned towards Mekka, we repeated the following salutation to the Prophet:—

"In the name of Allah, The Compassionate, The Merciful. Blessing and peace be upon thee, O Chief of Mankind, Illuminator of Darkness, and Messenger of Allah the All-Knowing King.

Blessing and peace be upon thee, O thou to whom the stones spoke; and for whom the moon was split asunder; and to whom trees ran that they might give thee answer. Blessing and peace be upon thee, O our Lord, our Prophet, and our Beloved: our Intercessor and our Delight. O our Lord! O Messenger of Allah! Blessing and peace be upon thee, O Prophet of Allah, O Beloved of Allah! Blessing and peace be upon thee, O thou whom Allah girded with the sword of victory! Blessing and peace be upon thee, O thou who intercedest with Allah for the sinner! Blessing and peace be upon thee, O thou Foremost of Allah's created beings, and Seal of Allah's messengers! Blessing and peace be upon thee, O Muhammad, O son of Abdulla, O son of Abdul Muttalib, O son of Hâshim! O Tâhâ! O Yâsin! O Bearer of good tidings! O consecrated to Allah! O Enlightener! O Leader of the host of the prophets and messengers! We have come to thee as visitors; and have sought thee longingly; and now we stand at thy door. Exclude us not from the door of thine intercession. Behold, O Messenger of Allah, I have come to thee fleeing from my sin and my misdeeds, seeking to draw nigh unto thee, and to beg thine intercession with my Lord. Therefore intercede for me, O thou Intercessor of the people! Thou art the acceptable intercessor. Thou art the pleader for whose intercession we hope when the foot slips on Es-Sirât.* We testify that thou hast discharged

* Es-Sirât is a bridge, finer than a hair and sharper than a sword, which will be stretched across the yawning pit of Jehannam at the Last Day. One end of it will be at the standing-place of humanity on the earth, and the other end will be at the gate of

thy mission. Thou hast given good counsel to the people. Thou hast striven valiantly in the way of Allah. Thou didst serve thy Lord until the unquestionable truth came to thee. We beg that thou wilt intercede for us, and our parents, and our teachers, and our neighbours, and for all who receive us with kindness. Blessing and peace be upon thee, O Leader of the prophets and messengers! And praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds."

Taking a pace to the right, we faced the window of Abu Bakr and uttered long greetings to him also. This accomplished, we followed a similar procedure at Omar's window; after which we went close to the Prophet's window and looked in. I saw nothing save a black pall or curtain hanging several feet away from the railings. There now remained no costly ornaments whatever. Most of the jewels which once hung before the tomb had been long since removed by Fakhri Pasha, the last Turkish governor of El Medîna, and sent to Enver Pasha and Talaat Pasha in Constantinople. The last of the treasures are said to have been removed by the Sharîf Ali, governor of El Medîna during the reign of King Husayn. The eunuch aghas who guard the tomb are generally believed also to have made a practice of stealing the rich gifts of pilgrims from time immemorial.

The extravagant salutations and supplications which my guide addressed to the Prophet are regarded as unholy by the puritans. Before we began to perform the rites, my guide had confided to me with a secret air that he would now "visit me the tomb according to the manner of the true Muslimîn who love Allah's Prophet

Paradise. Only the righteous will be enabled to pass safely across Es-Sirât, without falling headlong into Jehannam.

—God bless him and give him peace!"—thereby giving me to understand that in according me this privilege he ran some risk of violence at the hands of the fanatical Wahhâbîs who were in the city.

The Wahhâbîs and other puritans are largely guided in matters of ritual by the writings of Ibn Taymia. I have heard it declared by more than one learned shaykh that it was through reading the books of this jurist that Ibn Abdul Wahhâb, the founder of the Wahhâbî brotherhood, was impelled to begin his campaign of puritanism. Concerning the visit to El Medîna, Ibn Taymia writes:—

"When the Muslim enters El Medîna let him repair to the Mosque of the Prophet—Allah bless him and give him peace!—and there pray: for one prayer in this mosque is better than a thousand prayers in any other, save only the Haram of Mekka. Let him then salute the Prophet and his two companions; for of a truth he said, 'If any man salute me, verily Allah will give back my spirit unto me, that I may return his salutation.' This is related by Abu Daud and others."*

"Abdulla, the son of Omar, when he entered the Mosque used to say simply: 'Peace be upon thee, O Prophet of Allah! Peace be upon thee, O Abu Bakr! Peace be upon thee, O my father!' And so he would depart. It was thus also that the Companions saluted the Prophet.

"According to the majority of the 'ulemâ, in-

* Any traditional saying of the Prophet, if it is to be regarded as trustworthy, must be vouched for by one having authority. The two most reliable collections of traditions are those of El Bukhâri and Muslim. These two men accepted no tradition as genuine unless it was confirmed by evidence from several different sources.

cluding the Imâms Mâlik, Esh-Shâfi'î, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, it is correct for the visitor to face the tomb, that is, to stand with his back turned towards the Kibla. The Imâm Abu Hanîfa, on the other hand, says he should face the Kibla, and accordingly some of the followers of this Imâm say that the visitor should turn his back to the Hujra, while others say he should stand so that it is at his left hand.

"All authorities agree that the visitor must not touch nor kiss the Hujra, nor circumambulate it, nor pray towards it. And if the visitor says in his salutation 'Peace be upon thee, O Messenger of Allah! O Prophet of Allah! O Best of Allah's created beings! O Most Honoured by thy Lord of all creation! O Leader of the pious ones!': if he says this, then he has said all, for these are all the attributes which are his—Allah bless him and give him peace! Let him offer up no supplication as he stands over against the tomb, for this is entirely forbidden by general consent of the Imâms. The Companions did not so, but instead, they faced the Kibla and offered up their supplications in the Mosque. Verily, the Prophet said 'O God! Let not my tomb become an idol that is worshipped.' He also said 'May Allah curse the Jews and Nazarenes, for that they have taken the tombs of their prophets as places of worship. Beware ye of what they have done!' And after his death 'Aisha said, 'Had it not been for this, he would have directed that his tomb be made conspicuous, but he feared that it would be used as a place of worship.' "

My companion, in saying at the tomb "We beg that thou wilt intercede for us . . ." was guilty of bid'a.

The puritans, when pressed, will admit that it is their belief that Muhammad will be the intercessor for the Muslimîn on the Last Day. But, say they, we have no exact knowledge of the matter; such things are known to God alone. Is it not possible, they would imply, that God may withdraw the power of intercession from His Prophet, or that He may never confer it upon him: "Who is he that may intercede with Him, save by His gracious permission?" ("The Throne Verse," Chapter *The Cow.*)

Prayers said in mosques which contain tombs are held by many puritans to be unlawful; because the ignorant worshipper, having prayed to God, is apt to turn next to the grave and pray to the mouldering bones of its inmate. I myself have heard men among the lower orders of Egyptians, in the Mosque of El Husayn in Cairo, begging the martyred son of Ali to send them sums of money or good crops. In the tomb-mosque of Zaynab, I have heard women implore that departed lady to make their wombs fruitful.

We now passed round to the eastern side of the Hujra, and came to a stand opposite a window in the stone wall of the mosque. At the spot on which we stood the Prophet received many of the Korânic revelations. Facing the Hujra, we saluted Allah's messenger to the Prophet, the angel Gabriel, and also the remaining three archangels, Michael, Isrâfîl, and Azrâil the angel of death.

Passing round then to the northern side of the Hujra, we stood before the tomb of Fâtma, which stands separate from the vault containing the remains of the Prophet and his two companions, and repeated this invocation:—

"Peace be upon thee, O our Lady Fâtma the Fair! Peace be upon thee, O daughter of Allah's Messenger! Peace be upon thee, O daughter of Allah's Prophet! Peace be upon thee, O thou Chief of Women! Peace be upon thee, O Fifth of the People of the Garment!* May Allah Most High be pleased with thee, and content thee with the best of pleasures. Peace and Allah's mercy and His blessing be upon thee, and upon thy father, the chosen one, and upon thy excellent husband, and thy sons the two Hasans."

Fâtma's tomb, a catafalque draped with a black pall, can be seen through the screen of the Hujra. There is a doubt as to whether the Prophet's daughter is really buried within the Mosque, or in the cemetery El Bakî'a outside the city wall. The pilgrims repeat their salutations at both graves.

The Hujra is said to contain a fifth space or grave which is believed to be destined to receive the body of Îsa bin Maryam (Jesus Christ). The manner in which this will be fulfilled is related by the Muslims thus:—

"The second of the Greater Signs of the approach of the Last Day will be the descent from the heavens of Îsa—Blessings and peace be upon him! He will come with his hands resting upon the wings of two angels, and will alight upon the white minaret eastward of Damascus. Then El Muhdi† will come to him from the

* The People of the Garment (ahl el Kisâ) were the Prophet, his daughter Fâtma, her two sons Hasan and Husayn, and their father Ali ibn Abi Tâlib, the fourth Khalîfa. The Prophet once wrapped his abaya about himself and these four, in order to demonstrate their special connection or kinship with himself, and their consequent eminence. After this incident they became known as the People of the Garment. (cf. Ruth 3, ix.).

† El Muhdi is to be the reformer of Islâm: he may be compared to the Jewish Messiah.

Land of the Greeks, or from Mount Sinai, and Îsa will lift up his voice and say 'O people! Give praise unto your Lord and glorify Him.' This the assembled people will do; and when the hour of prayer has come, then will the people call upon him to lead them in prayer. But he will refuse, and will say,'Your imâm must be one of yourselves.' Then will El Muhdi come forth and lead him (Îsa) and them in prayer. This shall Îsa do in honour of this nation and its Prophet—upon whom be blessings and peace.

"At that time it shall come to pass that Ed-Dajjâl* shall be engaged in besieging the people of Jerusalem, whose gate shall be locked against him. And he shall say, 'Open ye the gate!

"Now when Îsa shall have come unto them they will open the gate. Then shall Ed-Dajjâl see Îsa, and straightway shall flee from him, he and they that are with him. And Îsa shall go forth with El Muhdi in search of him; and Allah shall circumscribe the earth about him so that Îsa shall overtake him, he and they that are with him, nigh unto the gate of Ludd. Then Îsa—on whom be peace!—shall look upon him and say 'Perform thy prayers!' But Ed-Dajjâl shall say, 'O Prophet of Allah, they have been performed!' Upon which Îsa will say, 'O thou enemy of Allah! Of a truth thou hast asserted that thou thyself art the lord of the worlds: therefore thou didst not pray.' And Îsa shall strike him with a javelin, and slay him.

"And Îsa shall command great diligence in keeping the laws of our Prophet—Allah's peace and blessings be upon him!—and in his time there shall be great

* Ed-Dajjâl, the Impostor (or El Masîh ed-Dajjâl, the lying Christ), is a false Messiah who is to appear on earth shortly before the Last Day. His followers will be chiefly Jews, and he is identified by some authorities as the Messiah of the Jews.

security and tranquillity, abundance, ease, and great blessedness. This shall continue for forty years. And Isa shall take a woman to wife, and two sons shall be born to him. Then shall El Muhdi die, and Isa shall pray over his body and bury him in Jerusalem.

"Then Isa too shall die, being now come to the age of seventy-three years—having lived three and thirty years before his ascent into heaven, and forty years after his second coming. He shall die at El Medîna, and shall be buried beside Abu Bakr the Trustworthy —May Allah be pleased with him!"

In the northern side of the Hujra is the iron gate which gives access to the interior. This is opened every evening by the eunuch guards, who then light lamps within the chamber. Visitors may enter upon making a considerable present to the Chief Agha. For this purpose they are made to put on a set of clothes similar to those of the aghas, consisting of a voluminous white jubba with very long sleeves, a broad sash, and an enormous white turban. No one ever enters unless the aghas know exactly who he is.

"The Sultân Mahmûd Nûr ed-Dîn (Sultân of Syria 1145-73 A.D.)" writes Es-Samhûdî in his history of El Medîna, "one night saw the Prophet three times in a dream. Each time that he appeared to him, the Prophet said 'O Mahmûd! Rescue me from these two persons!' And behold, there were two red-haired persons opposite to him.

"Rising before dawn, the Sultân summoned his vizier and told him of these things. Then said the vizier 'This is a matter which has happened in El Medîna. No one but you may deal with it.'

"So the Sultân made ready a thousand beasts, and proceeded to El Medîna, which he entered without

anyone's being aware that he was coming. The first thing he did was to order that the names of all people in the city were to be written down, in order that he might distribute alms to them. Then he gave away much money, and what was due to each man he himself put in that man's hand. This he did in order that he might be enabled to look closely at each one, hoping that he would recognise the two red-haired men whom the Prophet had pointed out to him in his dream. But among all those who came forward he did not see those he sought. Therefore he asked: 'Has anybody not received alms?'

"The people replied: 'Nobody remains save two sojourners from Andalusia, who are lodging in the hospice which stands before the Prophet's Hujra—Allah bless him and give him peace!' Then they persevered in the search for them until at last they brought them before the Sultân, who, as soon as he saw them, said to his vizier: 'These are indeed the two.'

"Then he asked them concerning themselves, and they answered and said 'We came that we might sojourn in the Prophet's City.'

"Said the Sultân, 'Tell me the truth!' and he put them to torture. Then they confesssed that they were Christians, and that they had come there in order to carry him away who was in the Hujra. This they would do at the instigation of their kings.

"It was found that they had dug a hole in the ground beneath the Mekka-ward wall of the Mosque, in the direction of the Hujra, throwing the loose earth into a well in the hospice. It is also related that they kept the earth in their store-closets, whence they would carry it out and fling it beyond the city.

"Upon hearing these things, the Sultân cut off the heads of those two men beside the window to eastward of the Hujra, in the outer wall of the Mosque. After that he had them burnt with fire.

"Finally he ordered a trench to be dug about the Hujra, and into it was poured molten lead and brass; and the greatest precautions were taken to keep the tomb inviolate. Then the Sultân Nûr ed-Dîn mounted his horse and returned to Esh-Shâm."

Excluding renowned shayks of religion, the only people who are admitted into the Hujra, without first being thoroughly catechised, are kings and princes. Even these are expected to enter for the ostensible purpose of performing some menial service; admission for the purpose of examining the interior is not permitted. The visitor takes a broom, a duster, or a lighted lamp, and silently assists the aghas in their duties. The actual vault containing the tombs of the Prophet and his two companions is always covered with a black pall. The tombs are said to be surmounted by a black stone building, but no Arab writer has given a convincing account of the interior of the sepulchre, for the reason that nobody save the aghas, and those who constructed it, has ever seen it. I was informed that the aghas are dumb on this subject, and I myself did not venture to open the question with any of them. The people of El Medîna make a greater mystery of Muhammad's tomb than the Mekkans make of the Kaaba. One of their tales is that when the lamps in the Mosque are put out, a light emanates from the Prophet's tomb and illuminates it more brightly than before. It is comparatively easy to sustain this story as the Mosque is closed at night, except during Ramadhân and on occasions when the hâjjis in the city are very numerous,

and at such times the lamps are left burning. The curtains which hide the tomb are changed by the aghas at night, when the doors of the Mosque are locked.

The tale which relates that Muhammad's body is contained in a coffin suspended between heaven and earth is unknown among the Muhammadans themselves.

Within the Hujra, at the left-hand side of the door, the Kûfic Korân of Othmân, the third khalîfa, is said to be preserved. This book is reputed to be one of the seven copies which were made when Othmân ordered the rescension of all the then existing copies. Othmân's Korân is never opened save in times of great affliction, such as the approach of the plague. At such times the 'ulemâ enter the Hujra and read aloud from the sacred volume. This procedure is believed to bring the blessing of security to the city.

At the moment of Othmân's assassination he was reading in this book, and it is said that his blood still stains the page at the words "God shall protect thee against them, for He both hears and knows."

Leaving the tomb of Fâtma, we returned to the eastern side of the Hujra, and facing in the direction of the cemetery El Bakî'a, we saluted the dead who are buried there, addressing them as "People of El Bakî'a." Then, turning in the direction of Mount Ohod, we saluted Hamza and the other martyrs who fell with him at the Battle of Ohod. Further prayers are then said at the Prophet's window, and at Othmân's mihrâb in the southern wall of the Mosque. The pilgrim is then at liberty to offer up his private supplication to God, and the rites of visitation are completed.

The moment I had finished these rites I became aware that wherever I moved there was somebody

sitting on the floor in front of me, with his handkerchief spread out before him. Whichever way I turned I found a spread handkerchief with a few coins lying upon it, to indicate what was expected of me. I dropped a coin on two or three of the handkerçhiefs, whereupon their owners at once gathered them up, rose, and walked away to spread them elsewhere. Some of them ran in their haste to find other hâjjis.

At last I refused all further solicitations, and leaving Aamir to return to his shop, I sat down with my back resting against a pillar to await the midday prayer which was near at hand. I found considerable amusement in observing the eagerness of the Medînans to extract money from the hâjjis. When a pilgrim was seen walking among the columns, a Medînan would creep quietly behind each of the pillars in his line of march, and spreading a handkerchief on the ground, would await his approach with an unconscious air. If the hâjji turned aside, the cadgers snatched up their handkerchiefs and took up a new position which their victim appeared likely to pass.

Men and boys of all ages engaged in these activities, from grey-bearded men to urchins of twelve years. All were cleanly dressed in white turbans and thawbs, and cloth jubbas.

XII

TOPOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES ON EL MEDÎNA

EL MEDÎNA lies on the Central Arabian Plateau; thus differing from Mekka, which is a city of the coastal plain.

The town is situated nearly in the middle of a number of mountain groups, which are ranged about it somewhat in the form of a horse-shoe, the opening of which is towards the south-east. The names of the chief of these mountain groups are: Jebel Ohod and Jebel Thowr, on the north; Jebel 'Ayr, on the south-west; and Jebel Sal'a, on the west. Within these encircling mountains the ground, which consists of a sandy loam with out-croppings of rock, slopes gently from south to north, thus according with the general slope of the whole of the Central Arabian Plateau.

The distance between Jebel Ohod and Jebel 'Ayr is some ten miles; while, from the foot of the western hills, the plain stretches southward and eastward beyond the enflanking mountains as far as the eye can see. From Jebel 'Ayr to within a distance of less than half a mile of the walls of El Medîna, the ground consists of a broken slope of volcanic rock; and on the plain to eastward of the city lies a superimposed mass of black lava. The latter extends to within a mile of the eastern gate of El Medîna—called Bâb el Jum'a or Bâb el Bakîa. It is known as El Harra. It is probably much more than ten miles in length, from west to

east, and is some two miles wide. It comes to an abrupt termination at a distance of half a mile from the mountain range of Jebel Ohod, to which it runs parallel; and on the opposite flank it forms, for some distance, the right bank of a shallow watercourse which flows westward to El Medîna. This watercourse passes along the southern wall and through the eastern suburbs of the city, and then flows north-westward into the hills.

The lava stream of El Harra is about ten feet thick, and on all sides it rises abruptly from the sandy soil, like a black wall.

The people of El Medîna relate that when Muhammad, soon after his arrival in that city, took up arms against the Jews who dwelt there, the latter buried their jewels and money in the Harra. Afterwards the Muslims strove to unearth those treasures, but with very little success. The bulk of the buried hoard has never been found. Occasionally some Bedouin, scratching with his stick in the cavities of the porous rock, discovers a solitary gold coin or an ear-ring, but that is all.

The space between the Harra and the city is thickly grown with palm trees, and in the shade cast by these, birsîm, wheat, barley, tomatoes, and several other sorts of vegetables are grown.

The fields in this neighbourhood resemble deep pits; for the husbandmen, seeking a richer soil, have dug to a depth of some eight feet, and piled the upper earth in wall-like heaps at the sides. To southward of the city, groves of palm, ithl, and lote trees extend in the form of a wedge between the Harra and Jebel 'Ayr, for a distance of six or seven miles. Houses and small villages lie scattered among the trees, but at the

time of my sojourning there these were, almost without exception, ruined and deserted. The fields also, save those near Bâb el Bakîa, were untilled and bare. This melancholy state of affairs was a result of the Wahhâbî siege.

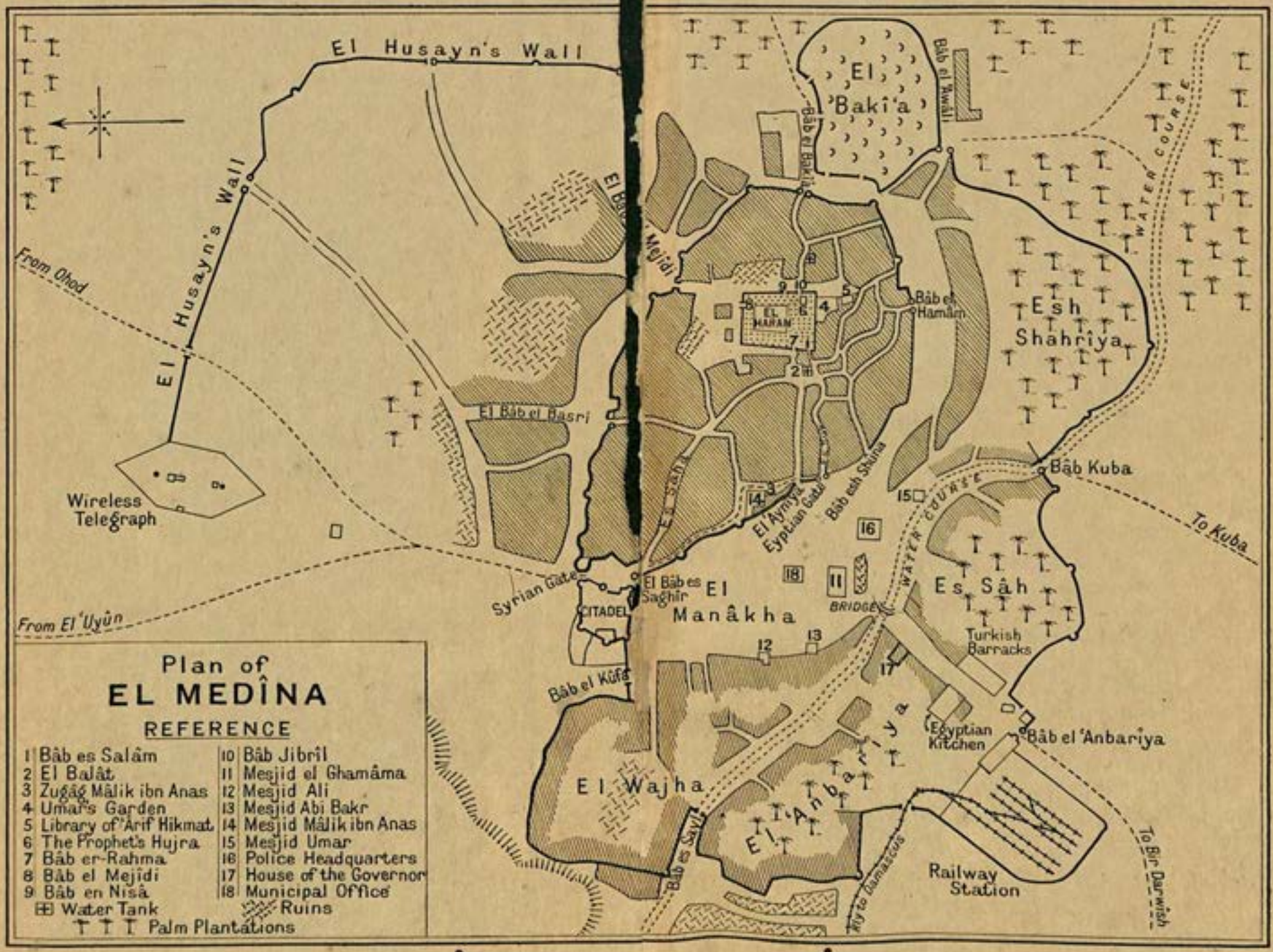
Somewhat to the north-west of Jebel Ohod, beyond the western spur of the mountain, there is an extensive oasis known as El 'Uyûn. The palm groves and fields of birsîm which flourish in this spot are kept alive by several springs of brackish water.

El Medîna, or Medînat en-Nabi,* is of an oval form, its greatest dimension being from east to west. It is protected by a high strong wall, in which there are many bastions and nine gates. The names of the latter are: Bâb el Jum'a or Bâb el Bakîa, facing east; El Bâb el Mejîdi, El Bâb el Basri, and El Bâb esh-Shâmi, facing north; El Bâb es-Saghîr, El 'Aynîya, and El Bâb el Masri, facing west; Bâb esh-Shûna, and Bâb el Hamâm, facing south.

El Bâb esh-Shâmi and El Bâb el Masri (the Syrian and Egyptian Gates respectively) are very fine structures, with massive bastions containing guard-rooms. El 'Aynîya possesses no gate: it is merely a gap in the wall, which was made by the Turks when they constructed the new street known as El 'Aynîya. To the eastward of Bâb el Jum'a lies the cemetery El Bakîa, the low western wall of which is near the eastern wall of the city, being only a few feet from it. The walls approach one another so closely that a wooden gate has been constructed at that point, in order that the gap may be closed at night.

A second wall, of considerable strength but less

*El Medîna means "the City": Medînat en-Nabi, the Prophet's City.


El Husayn's Wall
El Husayn's Wall
From Ohod
El Bâb el Masri
Wireless Telegraph
El Bakî'a
Bâb el Bakî'
Bâb el Mawâli
Bâb el Mejîdi
Bâb el Hamâm
Esh Shahriya
Bâb Kuba
To Kuba
Bâb esh Shâm
El Aymya Egyptian Gate
Syrian Gate
El Bâb es Saghîr
CITADEL
El Manâkha
BRIDGE
Es Sâh
Turkish Barracks
From El 'Uyûn
Bâb el Kûfa
Egyptian Kitchen
Bâb el 'Anbariya
El Wajha
El 'Anbariya
Railway Station
To Bir Darwish
Plan of
EL MEDÎNA
REFERENCE
1 Bâb es Salâm
2 El Balât
3 Zuqâq Mâlik ibn Anas
4 Umar's Garden
5 Library of 'Arif Hikmat
6 The Prophet's Hujra
7 Bâb er-Rahma
8 Bâb el Mejîdi
9 Bâb en Nisâ
10 Bâb Jibril
11 Mesjid el Ghamâma
12 Mesjid Ali
13 Mesjid Abi Bakr
14 Mesjid Mâlik ibn Anas
15 Mesjid Umar
16 Police Headquarters
17 House of the Governor
18 Municipal Office
Water Tank
Ruins
Palm Plantations

massive than the inner wall, extends irregularly from a point in the southern wall of the Bakîa cemetery to the fort at the western end of the city. The two walls enclose some two square miles of ground, considerably less than half of which lies within the inner wall. The gates in the outer wall bear the following names:—Bâb el 'Awâli, and Bâb Kuba, facing south; Bâb el 'Anbarîya, and Bâb es-Sayl, facing west; Bâb el Kûfa, facing north. With the exceptions of Bâb el 'Anbarîya and Bâb Kuba, the gates in the outer wall appear to be of no great defensive value.

The Muslim historians record that the first person to build a wall about El Medîna was Muhammad ibn Is-hâk, governor of the city in 236 A.H. (850 A.D.) It was rebuilt in 540 A.H. by order of the Sutlân of Mosul. In 557 A.H. the Sultân Mahmûd Nûr ed-Dîn, when visiting the city in order to thwart the two Christians who designed to steal the Prophet's body, ordered that the outer wall be erected. Both walls have been rebuilt several times, the last to rebuild the inner wall being the Turkish Sultân Abdul Azîz, in A.D. 1867.

The western part of the space which lies between the outer and inner walls of the city is filled by the large suburbs of Es-Sâh, El 'Anbarîya and El Wajha; while the southern part is occupied by palm groves, among which are mud houses and walled camel yards. The latter district is known as Esh-Shahrîya.

Between the suburb El Wajha and the inner wall is the couching place of the caravans, El Manâkha.

Outside the northern and western walls stand many large buildings, some of which appear to have once been magnificent palaces. These houses were built by wealthy Turks and others who settled here in the days of the Sultân Abdul Hamîd. El Medîna, with its

gardens, and its railway bringing fruits and vegetables and stores of merchandise from Damascus, was not an unpleasant place of retirement to men wearied by the stress of the modern world and disgusted by its disregard of religion. The opening of the Hijâz Railway in 1908 marked the beginning of a great influx of wealthy permanent residents to El Medîna. Soon afterwards the population of the city probably reached a higher level than it had ever reached before.

The rise of the Turkish nationalists, however, brought a feeling of insecurity into this sanctuary; for the nationalists did not value the possession of the Haramayn, and scarcely considered the honour worth the expense to which Turkey was put by having to bribe the Arab tribes to refrain from obstructing the roads. The fear that the Arab prince Ibn Rashîd, Amîr of Hâil, desired to get possession of the city, and the greater fear that the dreaded Wahhâbîs of the south might repeat their exploits of the beginning of the nineteenth century, had already induced many to leave it before the Sharîf Husayn declared war on Turkey.

Since that event misfortune has persistently followed El Medîna, culminating in the Wahhâbî siege, which lasted fifteen months. The end of that siege found the stricken city with only 6,000 inhabitants remaining, although at one time her resident population is said to have been 70,000 or 80,000 souls.

Walking in the silent lanes without the walls, I heard no sound of human voices. Some of the buildings—those near the city walls—were closed and appeared to be undamaged. Others, which lay further out, were crumbling to total ruin, for the thieving Bedouins had

torn away the wooden beams and casements for the purpose of feeding their camp fires.

The railway station lies at the western end of the city, beside the Bâb el 'Anbarîya. It is a rectangular walled enclosure projecting beyond the outer city wall, and the offices are in a two storeyed-building beside the gate. At the time of my visit there were several rusty locomotives, and a number of broken passenger carriages and goods trucks in the compound. No train had entered or left the station for many months.

At the north-western extremity of the city there is a small square fort, which was built by the Turkish Sultân Selîm in 939 A.H. (1532 A.D.) It stands on a rising ground, and is strongly built of stone. Its walls are some thirty-five feet in height, and a round watch-tower rises above its western ramparts. The hill of Jebel Sal'a which overlooks it is crowned with another small fort, built by the Turks in recent years. This commands the road to Jebel Ohod, and also serves to protect a large wireless telegraph station which stands below it on the plain at a distance of some three miles from the Syrian Gate. The lofty steel masts of the telegraph are planted eighty or a hundred yards apart, and at their feet are low stone buildings. The whole is enclosed by a wall ten feet high.

A thin wall of mud and stone extends eastward from the angle of the telegraph compound. It crosses the road from Jebel Ohod, and continues south-eastward until it comes to within five hundred yards of the Bâb el Mejîdi in the city wall, where it terminates. This wall was built by King Husayn, who dreamed of filling the space which it encloses with gardens and houses. This space is perhaps as large as that enclosed

by the two city walls. I found a few straggling palm trees standing in the waterless soil, but they were dying for the lack of human hands to tend them.

The principal street of El Medîna is the market street called Es-Sûk. This runs from the Egyptian Gate to the great gate of the Mosque, Bâb es-Salâm. It is paved with cobbles of granite, and is lined from end to end with small shops, which are mere cupboards in the ground floors of the tall houses of the muzzawirs. A longer and wider street, with few shops, leads from the Syrian Gate in a south-easterly direction, and crossing El Balât, joins Es-Sûk at a distance of eighty yards from the Mosque gate. This street is called Es-Sâha. A number of fine old houses are situated in it, and between them are meaner dwellings. As in Mekka, there are no spaces between the houses: a continuous line of dark-shuttered house-fronts extends on either side of the winding street from end to end.

Immediately within the Egyptian Gate a street leads out of Es-Sûk, and passing northward parallel to the western wall of the city, joins the street Es-Sâha near the Syrian Gate. It is called Zugâg Mâlik ibn Anas. The houses in this street completely overtop the city wall and look upon the Manâkha, for the ground-level within the wall has risen to within four feet of the top of the parapet. Without the wall the Manâkha lies twenty feet below; there the caravans put down their loads. Along the foot of the wall extends a line of little shops, empty save in the Hajj months.

Seventy yards north of the Egyptian Gate is the breach of El 'Aynîya. From this breach in the wall a wide straight street leads to the open space El Balât and the Great Mosque. This street is flanked along half its length by arches, beneath which are shops.

El 'Aynîya was hewn through the massed houses of the city somewhat more than half a century ago by the modernising Turks.

The oldest quarter of El Medîna is that which lies at its eastern end, between the Great Mosque and the Bâb el Bakîa. Here, many of the streets are so narrow that two men, walking on foot, cannot pass one another without turning sideways. The houses in this quarter are hundreds of years old. Small jealous casements, heavily barred with iron, admit a little light and air into their dark interiors, but no window is seen directly facing another on the opposite side of the way, for an inmate of a house, looking then from his window, would gaze as it were across the mere passage within a house, and perchance see the women of his brother Muslim bare-faced before his eyes.

I had thought that the Medînans built their houses thus closely adjoining because every inch of ground about the Prophet's tomb was of priceless value, for great is the blessing to him who may dwell there say the Muslims. But upon making some enquiry into this matter I was told: "No! Not so, O hâjji! But that the people of El Medîna might protect themselves from the simûm: therefore built they their houses thus." In Mekka (God show her honour!), say the Medînans, the heat is, wallah, intense, but in the days of summer the burning wind, es-simûm, is nigh to kill thee in the plain of El Medîna. It is for this, say they, that the houses of El Medîna are built close; for the hot wind rushing like the blast of a furnace across the plain, sweeps over the flat roofs of the parched city, finding no gaps of wide streets to enter. The Muslims, creeping along their narrow ways, do not fear the terrible blast which goes shrieking over their house-tops. Neverthe-

less, Ibn Turki, who in the Mosque daily after the noon prayer preached denunciations against the idolators and polytheists, said: "Of a truth the simûm comes with great violence upon El Medîna, but in the days of summer, the heat in Mekka is more intense."

Seventy years ago the Turks cut the wide street, El 'Aynîya, and built shops along half its length, but to this day the waste ground which borders a part of it is not built upon, and only in the Hâjj season are the shops occupied.

In Mekka the simûm wind is broken by the mountain heights which ring the city about, and little wind may reach to the depths of that valley. Nevertheless, or it may be for this reason, Ibn Turki spoke truth: the summer heat in Mekka is greater than it is in El Medîna.

This ancient quarter of El Medîna is called Hârat el Bakîa, and one of its narrow streets is called Zugâg el Aghawât. Here the eunuch guardians of the Mosque have their dwellings.

The vegetable and live-stock markets are held without the Bâb esh-Shûna, and the grain market without the Egyptian Gate. Between these two spots stands a straggling mass of ramshackle booths and huts, constructed with branches of trees, old wooden beams, tattered pieces of hair-cloth, and empty tins beaten flat. Here are sold tea, coffee, sugar, candles, tobacco, rice, and other articles of foodstuff. Other booths near the Egyptian Gate are stocked with household stuff, new and old. Arms and clothing, and all the things which the hâjjis require, are sold in Es-Sûk and in the first part of the Zugâg Mâlik ibn Anas, inside the Egyptian Gate. Under the arch of that gate sit the

sellers of sandals, gaily coloured, but of poor quality. But Aamir knew one from Damascus, who now sojourned and made sandals in the quarter of Esh-Shahrîya. This man made me an excellent pair of strong soles with straps of soft leather.

El Medîna is supplied with good drinking water from the spring called 'Ayn ez-Zarga, which is near the village of Kuba, four miles to southward of the city. This water was the best I tasted in the Hijâz, with the single exception of that of 'Ayn Zubayda in Mekka. The water of 'Ayn ez-Zarga has a faintly brackish taste, which is absent from the Mekkan spring.

A subterranean conduit leads the water of 'Ayn ez-Zarga into the city, where it fills two large stone reservoirs which have been constructed at a depth of some ten or fifteen feet below the ground level. One of these tanks lies on the northern side of Es-Sûk, some sixty yards from the Mosque gate, Bâb es-Salâm. The other is in the Hârat el Bakîa, to eastward of the Mosque. The former is quite below ground and is reached by stone steps, while the approach to the latter is by way of a paved slope.

Nearly every house in El Medîna has a well inside it, or in its coutryard. There is a hole in each floor of the house, directly above the well, and it is so arranged by the builders that the hole is within a small room, lined with stone or cement, which is used as a bathing place. A pulley is fixed in the topmost ceiling of the house, above the well-shaft, and through this runs a rope to which a bucket is tied. The rope passes down to the well, and a person in any floor of the house may haul upon it and draw up the bucket full of water. This ground water is used for ablutions and household purposes; it is not usual to drink it. The water is found

at a depth of from ten to twenty feet below the surface of the ground, and the supply is copious.

Mekka was a haram or sanctuary before the time of Muhammad. To her the Arab, when threatened with the vengeance of his enemy, might flee for sanctuary, and no man dare slay him there. El Medîna, on the other hand, or Yathrib as she was formerly called, did not become a haram until the Prophet commanded that so it should be. Said he: "Verily Abraham sanctified Mekka, and made supplication for her people; and verily I have made El Medîna sacred, even as Abraham sanctified Mekka."

There is some difference of opinion among the learned as to what is the extent of the haram territory of El Medîna, but the generally accepted view is that it is bounded on the east and west by the two harras or lava fields; on the north by Jebel Thowr, behind Ohod; and on the south by Jebel 'Ayr. These boundaries enclose a tract some ten miles long by two miles broad.

Said the Prophet: "Verily I have made a sanctuary of El Medîna, namely, of all that ground which lies between the two mountains—Thowr on the north, and 'Ayr on the south; that blood be not shed within her bounds, nor weapons carried with intent to kill; nor shall any tree be cut down save only for provender.

The three Imâms, Esh-Shâfi'i, Ibn Hanbal, and Mâlik, following these traditions, pronounce El Medîna to be a haram; but the fourth Imâm, Abu Hanîfa, citing certain other Traditions which show that trees were cut down and animals hunted there in the Prophet's lifetime, denies that she should possess that distinction.

The argument seems to turn on whether the trees had been planted by those who cut them down. Trees

and plants which are cultivated for food and timber may be made use of, but wild plants are inviolate. Similarly, domestic animals may be slaughtered for food within the haram limits, but wild animals may not be killed, nor even hunted in bloodless sport.

Formerly, many students of religion resided in El Medîna; but most of these, together with their professors, had long since fled to more hospitable places. A few of them had steadfastly remained in the city throughout the siege, however, and now these sat daily before Ibn Turki in the Haram. One of them was a slender fair-skinned old man with a long white beard. For thirty years he had sat listening attentively to the professors in the Haram of El Medîna, but he had not yet completed his studies. He was a man of a gentle demeanour and refined manner, and with an air of urgent earnestness he came to his daily lesson. I never saw him unwind his turban nor take off his jubba in the Mosque, however hot the day. He always brought with him a large tome on jurisprudence, and whenever Ibn Turki made a point which appealed to his imagination, he would put on his spectacles and turn up the page to see what his favourite jurist had to say about it. But long before he could come at what he sought, Ibn Turki had passed on to other matters.

Ibn Turki was a small slight man of a lean and hungry aspect—a man who thought too much and fasted too much, with the result that he disliked his weaker brethren too much. His Bedouin clothes were always immaculately clean, and he usually carried a tooth-stick in his hand. He was by birth a Nejder, and at one time had been a merchant of considerable wealth in Cairo. After certain years spent in amassing merchants' profits, the course of his life had been

suddenly changed by a call to the religious life. He had, so it was said, given away most of his possessions and money to the poor, and retired to El Medîna. In the Prophet's City he now preached daily. He was a puritan, but he could hardly be called a Wahhâbî because he did not follow exclusively the views of Ibn Abdul Wahhâb and the Imâm Ahmad ibn Hanbal, as the Wahhâbîs do. He was a man of wide learning, and on all questions he could, and did, repeat from memory the views of each one of the four imâms. He habitually wore a frowning and somewhat ill-tempered expression of countenance, but would occasionally unbend to exchange a humorous remark with a member of his audience. At such times he would smile with great charm, but briefly.

I used to sit in Ibn Turki's attentive circle on frequent days. He held his class in the cloister at the western side of the Mosque. Here he sat on the carpet with his back resting against a pillar, and his audience arranged themselves in a circle before him. Often he spoke with great scorn of the Syrians and Egyptians. Said he, bitterly, one day: "When they marry their daughters, they hire a maker of sweetmeats for ten days, fifteen days, to prepare sweetmeats of many sorts. They drape the walls of their bridal chambers with silk, which is unlawful. They put seats with cushions which, when they sit on them, go down a little. They hang mirrors on the walls. All this superfluity they have, but they will not so much as touch the clothing of a poor man, for fear that they might become infected with disease."

This tirade was impressive, for Ibn Turki spoke in the manner of one having authority. He had lived among the Egyptians. I was aroused from my train

of thought, however, by a Bedouin who, having found room between me and my neighbour for one of his horny splay feet, promptly sat down between us—with his right knee in my ribs. Another Bedouin, his companion, seated himself behind us.

" All the blessing of the occasion is lost," proceeded Ibn Turki, who was still dealing with marriage entertainments. " The angels have a strong dislike for chambers which are richly furnished, and they will not enter them. They love to go into a place of bare stone walls. So all the blessing is lost, brothers, and the place which the angels would have taken is left vacant to the devils, and the devils will not delay to go in."

This was magnificent. Who would not forego silk curtains and cushions which go down a little, in order that he might thereby ensure the presence of the angels at his wedding feast. But all this while the Bedouin sat with his knee in my ribs. Now Ibn Turki began to revile the shaykhs of religion, for, said he, it is their neglect of public instruction which allows the people to fall into unlawful practices. Warming to the attack he went on to accuse the shaykhs of many impious practices, finally asserting that for money they will give a man a passport to Paradise itself.

As this discourse proceeded, I observed that the Bedouin who sat at my left hand, with his knee in my ribs, was becoming every moment more restless. At Ibn Turki's final denunciation of the shaykhs, the sitters uttered shocked exclamations, and my Bedouin neighbour began to snivel and splutter, while tears coursed down his lined and unwashed face. At the same time he gave vent to sobbing exclamations of " Allah is Greatest! His praise and greatness! There is

no god but The God!" Tearfully he mumbled, wiping his eyes with a corner of his soiled kefîya, while Ibn Turki continued to deliver his further discourse with growing concentration of manner.

I thought then to myself, without doubt this Bedouin is much interested and deeply moved by Ibn Turki's lecture; doubtless he will continue to sit, with his knee in my ribs, until the bitter end.

But no! In another moment his snivelling subsided and ceased, and looking at his hard face I saw that it was no longer contorted. His tears had ceased to flow, he no longer uttered broken exclamations. His fickle wits had fastened on some other attraction: he had visualised a finjân of coffee, perhaps, or a new kefîya, which he purposed to buy in the market-place. He took his stick from the ground behind him, removed his knee from among my ribs, touched his companion on the shoulder, and in another moment was walking away, between the long rows of columns, towards Bâb er-Rahma with the tears still wet on his face.

Another teacher in the Haram of El Medîna was an Egyptian, one Ahmad et-Tantâwi, who had long been resident in the city. This old man was tall and portly of stature, and was white-bearded. He taught the system of the Imâm esh-Shâfi'i, and was a great favourite of the Malays, all of whom are followers of that system. He lived in the Zugâg es-Samhûdi, near the Bâb el Mejîdi. Since the Wahhâbî occupation he had ceased to teach in the mosque, but a number of students were in the habit of congregating at his house. Asceticism formed no part of this old man's creed. On one occasion a member of his audience expressed disgust at Ibn Sa'ûd's use of motor-cars in Mekka. But the old shaykh replied: " Listen, O my son! The

world and all that is in it is for thy use and thy enjoyment, given to thee by Allah."

" His praise and greatness! " cried the company.

" Eat good food! " continued Shaykh Ahmad. " Ride in a motor-car! Clothe thy body with fine garments! Take four women to wife! Only forget not Allah, O my son, Who gives thee the good things of the world."

Again his hearers uttered exclamations of praise to God.

" Some of them say," continued the shaykh, " that the Prophet (God bless him and give him peace!), that the Prophet was an ascetic; that he wore old tattered garments and ate nought save dates and bread, and drank only water."

" True, O my sir," said one of the sitters. " Thus have we understood."

The old man caught him up before he had ceased to speak.

" No! " said he. " It was not so, but when the Arabs came in their thousands to submit to Allah and his Prophet here in El Medîna, they beheld him clothed in fine raiment, and his hair was anointed with sweet scent, and his face all shining like to the full moon, and . . ."

But here the voices of those who sat on the carpet before him burst forth with one accord, as though moved by an uncontrollable impulse, drowning the old man's discourse, and saying, " Allah bless him and show him mercy! O thou beloved of Allah, and our beloved! O best of mankind! O Prophet of Allah! " And in the midst of them the old shaykh sat on as one inspired, carried away, as they all were, by enthusiastic devotion to the Prophet, by whose agency Allah had

guided the Muslimîn into the road which leads to Paradise. His beaming countenance shone, smooth now and flushed like that of a boy.

The Arab historians say that Yathrib was founded by 'Amlak, a son of Shem, whose tribe is known as El 'Amâlika. In the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the 'Amâlika were driven out by the Israelites, who remained in power at Yathrib until the bursting of the great dam at Marib in the Yemen. This disaster resulted in the dispersal of the Yemenite Arab tribes into distant parts of Arabia. The tribe of Bani 'Amr marched northward and settled in Yathrib, where they eventually overpowered the Jews who still dwelt there.

Subsequently the descendants of 'Amr became separated into two tribes, the 'Aus and the Khazraj, which were antagonistic to one another. Much strife occurred between these two tribes, in which the 'Aus ultimately gained the upper hand. Muhammad, however, upon his arrival in Yathrib, in 622 A.D., composed their differences.

After the coming of the Prophet the name Yathrib appears to have been no longer used, that of El Medîna being substituted for it.

When Muhammad fled from his persecutors in Mekka, he alighted from his camel at the village of Kuba, some four miles from El Medîna. There he remained for some days. He then proceeded among a concourse of rejoicing Muslims to El Medîna, and as he entered the city the people came out of their houses to meet him. They gathered about his camel with eager salutations, each striving for the honour of entertaining him, and crying: "Alight at my house, O Prophet of Allah!" And as he passed slowly along with the thronging crowd, all aflame with the Semitic

enthusiasm for the man of God, the Prophet repeatedly said, " Make way for my nâga, for verily she is under divine command; wherever she couches, in that place will I alight."

At last they came to the place where the Great Mosque now stands, and there the nâga couched, with her rider still on her back. Before the Prophet could dismount, however, she rose again, and pacing a few yards further, once more knelt down, this time before the house of one Abu Ayyûb, thenceforth known as El Ansâri—the Helper. The house of Abu Ayyûb el Ansâri still stands at a few yards distance from the south-eastern corner of the Mosque. Here the Prophet dwelt for seven months. During that time he built his mosque on the spot where his camel had first couched. The place was formerly a drying ground for dates, belonging to two orphans. These poor youths wished to give their property to Muhammad without recompense, but the Prophet insisted on making payment.

Muhammad's mosque was a simple walled enclosure measuring 120 feet by 100 feet. The foundations of the walls were built of stone, and the superstructure of mud bricks. The mihrâb was made in the northern wall, for the kibla* of Islam, at that time, was Jerusalem. A cloister was constructed at the mihrâb end, trunks of palm trees being used as pillars, and the roof made of palm fronds. The gates, three in number, were placed in the southern, the eastern, and the western walls.

* The kibla is the point towards which all turn their faces when repeating prayers. The Islamic kibla was changed from Jerusalem to Mekka in the second year of the Flight, in obedience to a new revelation (vide Chapter *The Cow*).

In course of time Muhammad built separate houses or chambers, for each of his wives on the space of ground between the Mosque and Abu Ayyûb's house. This ground was subsequently added to the Mosque; and the Prophet's tomb-chamber, which now stands several yards within the Mosque walls, was originally the house of his wife 'Aîsha. Muhammad died at noon on the twelfth day of the third month, Rabî el Awwal, in the year 11 A.H. (633 A.D.): the same day of the same month being the generally accepted date of his birth in the year 570 A.D.

XIII

THE HARAM OF EL MEDÎNA

DOWN the market street, Es-Sûk, came a tall strong negro dressed in a white Bedouin thawb with long flowing sleeves. About his waist was a belt full of rifle cartridges. With his great black left hand he grasped the sparse grey beard and the ends of the kefîya of a diminutive Bedouin. The latter wore a tattered hair-cloth mantle and the Wahhâbî head-dress of kefîya. and turban-cloth. These two passed quickly down the narrow way, as men engaged upon some urgent business. The black man wore a stern expression of countenance, but I thought I saw a glint of anxiety in his eye as he occasionally shot a glance to right or left. The little old Bedouin, his prisoner, limped as he walked, for one of his feet was deformed. His scowling glance was directed straight before him: he looked neither to right nor to left. Neither of these two spoke. A mob of Medînan youths pressed at their heels.

I was sitting with Aamir on the counter before his shop. Seated with us was the one-eyed youth, Saad. As the crowd went by, Aamir called to one who followed with them saying, " O Abu Ali, do us the favour! "

Abu Ali approached, a tall youth wearing a white turban.

" What is this? What has happened? " asked Aamir. "That one is a slave of Ibn Subhân:* what is he doing?"

* Ibrâhîm Sâlim ibn Subhân, governor of El Medîna at that time. He was a native of Northern Nejd, and a man of liberal

" Ay yes, O my uncle," said Abu Ali, " and the one in his hand was a Bedouin of the Mudayyina, who yesterday saw one smoking tobacco, and he called him a bibber of that which intoxicates.* Then he who was smoking tobacco made complaint to Ibn Subhân, and Ibn Subhân commanded his slave to drag the Bedouin through the streets of the city by his beard, and after that to thrash him with a jerîd."†

" There is no power and no strength but in Allah ! " said Aamir in a satisfied tone of voice. He added: " He was holding his beard in his right hand? "

" With his left hand," I said.

This assurance appeared to increase the satisfaction of those who heard it. The left hand is used for all unclean purposes. This, then, was a great indignity, that a man's beard should be grasped in the left hand of another. Here was a heaping-up of degradations, for to take hold of the beard of a man with hostile intent is alone an outrage. To this was added the fact that the left hand had been employed. But, greatest indignity of all, the left hand was the left hand of a slave.

Abu Ali sat down with us on the counter.

" It seems that some of the Bedouins are pious folk," I said to Aamir.

" Why? Do you think them pious? " he asked.

" I do not know," I said, " But I was sitting among Ibn Turki's row of students, listening to his discourse

mind. Whether the latter quality was the cause of his being removed from his office by Ibn Sa'ûd or not, I am unable to say. However that may be, he was supplanted a few weeks later, after the visit of the Wahhâbite Câdi to El Medîna.

* Khammâr: used coloquially to indicate a drunkard. An outrageous insult to a Muslim.

† The stick of a palm frond.

the other day, when a Bedouin who was sitting next to me began to cry. Ibn Turki said there were men in the world calling themselves shaykhs who, for money, would give one a paper which, they said, would admit him to The Garden. When the Bedouin heard that impiety he was so moved that the tears ran down his cheeks."

They laughed—Aamir and Abu Ali and one-eyed Saad.

"Listen, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Aamir. "I will tell you a story which I heard."

An Egyptian had approached and was examining a turban-cloth which hung above the counter, but hearing Aamir's words, he sat down with us to hear the tale.

"In a certain village near El Medîna there was a shaykh," said Aamir. "He used to teach a class of students in the Mosque. One day a Bedouin came and sat down among the students. After a little while, as the shaykh proceeded with his lecture, the Bedouin began to weep. Then said the shaykh to him: 'Why do you cry, O my brother?'

"Said the Bedouin, 'I had a goat, a magnificent goat, and it had a fine long beard. Then, one day, it was spoiled from me in a raid, and I saw it not again after that, ever.'

"But if you had been attending to me,' said the shaykh, 'you would not have thought of your goat.'

"'Wallah, O my uncle,' said the Bedouin. 'It was through attending to you that I thought of my goat. When I saw your long beard wagging while you discoursed, then I saw my goat chewing the cud, as it were with my eye.'

"Then the shaykh was angry, but the Bedouin

howled the more and cried, 'Ah, miskîn! vanished, the goat.' "

We laughed, and Aamir said to me: "But it is possible that the Bedouin whom you saw with Ibn Turki was a pious man, but pious Bedouins are few, and Allah knows best."

The conversation turning on the siege of El Medîna, I asked them how they had obtained food when the caravans no longer came from Yanbua and from the East.

Said Aamir: "Provision came to us from Allah. I tell thee, Hâjj Ahmad, there are forty saints dwelling in this street, between Bâb es-Salâm and the Egyptian Gate. Allah would never leave them to starve. In the Traditions it says: 'We will give to the people of El Medîna provision from here and from there and from the Garden of Eden.' "

Said Abu Ali: "Formerly there was a Pasha of the Turks who heard that saying, but he did not believe it. He determined to make plain that it was a lie. So one day he ordered all the gates of El Medîna to be locked, as is done on the day of the congregational prayer.* This was done, and the keys were given to the Pasha. The next day he rode through the Manâkha and he saw a caravan unloading sacks of grain. But the gates were still locked. Then the Pasha spoke to the camel-man, saying: 'Whence came this kâfila?'

"Said the camel-drivers: 'From here and from there and from the Garden of Eden,' and they said nothing but that.

"After that," concluded Abu Ali, "the Pasha

* During the Friday midday prayer in walled cities it is commanded that the city gates be locked, so that the guard may join in the prayer.

believed that Allah provides for the people of El Medîna, though they know not the manner of it."

Such tales are commonly believed and repeated by the Arabs with all the confidence of men proving a proposition from Euclid.

"There are forty saints in this street," said Aamir. "They have a shaykh, and he is the forty-first. We do not know who they are, but Allah knows."

"You know none of them?" asked the Egyptian. "In Egypt they know a saint by reason of his performing supernatural acts."

"There are people who know them," said he, "but I myself know them not. You can hear your secret thoughts being talked about in the streets of El Medîna though you have never mentioned them to any person and never spoken aloud to yourself."

"Strange!" I said.

"Strange, of a truth!" said Abu Ali. "And this happens in El Medîna alone of all the cities in the world."

Aamir and I rose to go to the Haram, as the Prophet's Mosque is called by the people of El Medîna. As we passed down the street, one overtook us, coming from the direction of the Egyptian Gate.

"Did you not see the slaves of Ibn Subhân thrashing the cursed Bedouin, Uncle Aamir?" asked this man.

"No, wallah!" said Aamir. "What happened?"

"They thrashed him with jerîds," said the other. "After the slaves had dragged him round the streets of the town, they threw him on the ground in the Manâkha and thrashed him with jerîds. There were two slaves thrashing him, and they broke fifty jerîds on his body; and he was still lying on the ground when I left the place."

"The command of Allah!" said Aamir.

My companion and I proceeded on our way to the Mosque. Entering the Bâb es-Salâm, we passed along the southern wall until we came to a little iron-barred window opposite the Hujra. This window disclosed a small garden beyond. This, said my companion, is the Garden of Umar ibn El Khattâb, which has been preserved for thirteen hundred years. A small door in the Mosque wall gave admittance to the garden, but we found it locked. Passing round the Hujra, however, we left the Mosque by the Bâb Jibrîl and, turning to the right, came to a doorway in a stone wall. Entering this we found ourselves in a small chamber containing a fountain of clear water. Beyond it lay Umar's Garden.

The guardian of the place handed us a vessel of water, inviting us to drink for the sake of the blessing, and then conducted us into the garden. The place was less than thirty yards square, and in it grew five or six stunted date-palms and a small patch of birsîm. A number of wooden planks and ladders lay at one side, and in a corner were some great iron cooking-pots. The latter are public property, and are taken and used by anybody who designs to prepare a feast in his house. At the northern side of the garden rose the lofty wall of the Mosque, while the western and southern sides were bounded by the blank walls of houses. The chamber of the doorway was built into a wall which formed the eastern boundary of the garden.

Having finished our inspection of this place we pursued our way to the public library of 'Arif Hikmat, which lies adjacent to it. The library is housed in a building composed of two domed rooms. It stands in a square court in which a number of trees and shrubs

are growing. The whole is enclosed by a high stone wall in which is a large gate of ornamental ironwork. The interior of the building was well appointed, the shelves, tables, and benches being of polished mahogany, and the floors covered with fine carpets. The books were all numbered, and might not be taken away from the building. On a table stood a large terrestrial globe: 'Arif Hikmat, who was Shaykh El Islâm* in Stambûl, had evidently believed that the earth is a sphere. Several old men in skull caps sat reading on the carpets near the windows, their turbans placed carefully on a bench or on the window sill near them.

The librarian and his assistant, both of whom were Turks, appeared to know where any given book was to be found. I asked for a volume of Fakhr er-Râzi's Commentary on the Korân, and the assistant librarian at once took it from a shelf and handed it to me with the care of one who handles a treasure.

This library was endowed by its founder, Shaykh 'Arif Hikmat, and the assistant librarian told me with an air of satisfaction that "we do not eat out of the hand of the king, neither from the hand of El Husayn, nor from the hand of Ibn Sa'ûd. Our provision comes from Stambûl, from the waqf bequeathed by the Shaykh. Therefore it is of no account to us who is king or who is sultân; we render praise to God, Who is Lord of All."

El Medîna had long been famous for its libraries. Had been, for after the Wahhâbî onset many valuable collections of books disappeared, no one knew whither. Sultân Mahmûd's library, adjoining Bâb es-Salâm,

* The chief of the religious shaykhs—the final authority in matters of religion.

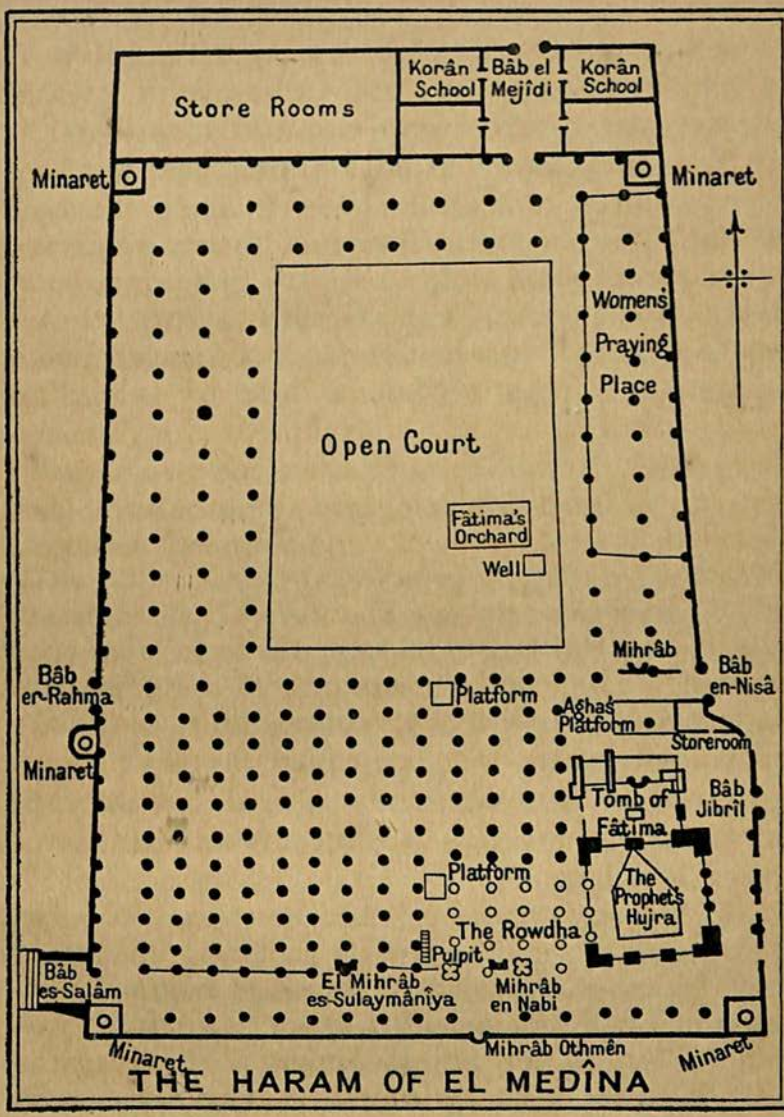
was said to be intact; but it was now closed, and Aamir was unsuccessful in his efforts to find the custodian of the key.

The famous libraries of Bashîr Agha, and those in the schools of Esh-Shifâ, of the Sultân Abdul Hamîd, and of Umar Effendi were said to be no longer in existence. Some said that most of the books had been stolen when the inhabitants of the city fled; others said the Wahhâbîs had burnt them; and others again said that many of them had been sold by those who should have guarded them. In the Great Mosque there are about a hundred large Korâns placed on shelves beside the Prophet's mihrâb. Most of these are beautifully written, and elaborately embellished with illuminations of gold, red, blue, and other colours. A few of them are printed copies. These volumes have been presented to the Mosque at various times for the use of visitors.

The Great Mosque, or Haram, of El Medîna is built like the Haram of Mekka, in the form of an open quadrangle. Its length, from north to south, is some 380 feet. In breadth it varies considerably, as the two long walls converge upon one another as they proceed northward. At its southern end it is some 280 feet broad and at its northern end 220 feet. Its walls are some thirty feet in height.

The Mosque is roofed at its southern end for more than a third part of its length, the roof being supported by twelve rows of massive cylindrical columns. On the eastern side there is also a cloister formed by two rows of columns, and a row of pilasters adjoining the wall. This space is enclosed by a wooden screen and forms the praying-place of the women.

The cloister on the western side of the Mosque is



THE HARAM OF EL MEDÎNA

formed by three rows of columns and a row of pilasters. This is the favourite place for shaykhs to deliver their lectures between the hours of prayer.

A wall, built across the Haram at a distance of some forty feet from its northern end, marks the limit on that side of the Mosque proper. The space between this inner wall and the outer or main wall of the Mosque is occupied eastward by four chambers used as a Korân school, and westward by store-rooms for lamp-oil, brooms, ladders, and other gear of the Mosque servants. Between these two blocks of chambers are situated several private rooms belonging to the Aghas. One of these is used by them as a place of ablution.

The cloister on the northern side of the Mosque is formed by two rows of columns, and a row of pilasters against the inner wall.

The total number of columns, including the square pillars of the Prophet's Hujra and the pilasters, is about 320. They are painted a dull red brown, and stand cemented into massive circular bases of brass.

The roof of the cloisters is constructed in the form of a succession of little domes, the greater number of which are whitened on the under side, as all are on the outside. Underneath the arches on all sides of the Mosque the ground is paved with slabs of white marble. Over this pavement great squares of carpet are spread. The open central court is unpaved; it is covered with a gravel of crushed red sandstone.

The columns of the Rowdha are sixteen in number, fourteen of which are cylindrical. The remaining two, which stand one on either side of the Prophet's Mihrab take the form of four cylindrical shafts massed together. The domes over the Rowdha are somewhat more lofty

than those in the other parts of the Mosque, and their under surfaces are adorned with flowery painted designs. Most of them also contain windows of coloured glass.

Between the columns are horizontal rods on which lamps are hung by means of chains. There are a few electric lights in the Haram, but the oil lamps greatly outnumber these.

The Prophet's Hujra stands in the south-eastern corner of the Mosque, immediately eastward of the Rowdha. It is situated at a distance of twenty-five or thirty feet from the southern wall, and half that distance from the eastern wall. It consists of two enclosures, one within the other. The outer enclosure is some forty-five feet square, and the screen of ornamental iron-work by which it is bounded is supported by square stone pillars. This screen is said to rest upon a subterranean wall of solid metal, being the same which was made by order of the Sultân Nûr ed-Dîn. It was made by digging a trench twenty feet deep and filling it with molten lead and copper.

Within the outer enclosure there is a five-sided chamber, the walls of which are some twenty feet in height. Three of its sides—the eastern, the southern, and the western—are disposed as sides of a square, while the remaining two meet in an acute angle at the centre of the northern side of the outer enclosure. This inner chamber stands directly underneath the green dome. It is always completely covered by a black pall. Within it lie the tombs of Muhammad, Abu Bakr, and Umar, and the empty sepulchre.

Adjoining the Prophet's Hujra on the northern side is a smaller enclosure, measuring forty feet by twenty feet, in which is the reputed tomb of Fâtima.

There are gates in the iron-work screen on each side of the Prophet's Hujra, but the only means of entrance which is commonly used is the gate in the northern side of Fâtima's tomb-chamber. Passing through this, the visitor comes to another gate in the iron-work partition which separates the two tomb-chambers. This gate gives access to the Prophet's Hujra.

To northward of Fâtima's enclosure, and separated from it by a space some ten feet wide, is a raised platform. In this place several of the Aghas may usually be seen. They also invite hâjjis of distinction to sit, and perform their prayers there. The platform has the advantage, in the eyes of many, of being so placed that the worshipper stationed there, and facing Mekka, also faces the Prophet's tomb. To eastward of the Aghas' platform there is a store room.

In the open court of the Mosque there is a small garden enclosed within an iron railing. It measures some twenty feet by thirty feet, and is known as Fâtima's Orchard. Three stunted palm-trees, a small sidr tree, and a few shrubs grow in it. Near it is a well of sweet water, sometimes called the Prophet's Well, but more usually referred to as the Zemzem of El Medîna.

There are five public gates in the Medînan Haram. In the western wall are Bâb es-Salâm, and Bâb er-Rahma. Through the latter the dead are borne into the Mosque to be prayed over before burial. In the northern wall is Bâb el Mejîdi, also called Bâb et-Tawassul. In the eastern wall are the two gates Bâb en-Nisâ—the Women's Gate—being the nearest gate to the women's praying-place, and Bâb Jibrîl. Through the last the dead are borne out to the cemetery El Bakîa.

In addition to these gates there is a door in the northern wall, which leads into one of the store-rooms, but this is kept shut. In the southern wall there is another small door which gives access to Umar's Garden. This too is kept shut unless a visitor pays the keeper of the key to open it, in order that he may pass through by the way which Umar used to go. Other small doors give access to the minarets.

At each corner of the Mosque there is a lofty spire: that at the south-eastern corner is of a beautiful Saracenic design, with stalactic carving under the galleries; the other three taper smoothly to a point in the Turkish style, and are as ugly as huge waxen candles, which they resemble. A fifth minaret, of a meaner aspect, stands adjacent to Bâb er-Rahma.

There are a number of mihrâbs situated in various parts of the Mosque. These have historical associations, and many of the Muslims, for reasons of personal preference, say their prayers before one of them rather than before any of the others. Sometimes a man performs his prayers before each one of them during a day or during a week. The hâjjis are usually directed by the muzawwirs to pray two prostrations before each. Needless to relate, the favourite one is the Prophet's Mihrâb.

These mihrâbs, then, together with the space immediately in front of them, form as it were chapels in the Mosque. Their names and positions are as follow: 1, Mihrâb en-Nabi, in the Rowdha; 2, Mihrâb Othmân, in the east centre of the southern wall; 3, El Mihrâb es-Sulaymânîya, built in the ninth century of the Hijra, and cased with marble by the Turkish Sultân Sulaymân the Magnificent in the tenth century: this mihrâb is in line with that of the Prophet, and is

situated to westward of it; 4, Mihrâb el Mutahajjad, on the northern side of Fâtima's tomb-chamber: there is a raised platform before this mihrâb, and the place is said to be that in which the Prophet performed supererogatory prayers at night. Within Fâtima's tomb-chamber there is another mihrâb, but this is not ordinarily accessible; 5, Mihrâb Bâb en-Nisâ, immediately within the Women's Gate.*

There are four windows in the Mosque walls: three of these are opposite the Hujra, in the eastern wall between Bâb Jebrîl and the south-eastern corner of the Mosque; the fourth is that which opens into Umar's Garden.

Two small square platforms, raised seven feet from the ground, stand one behind the other in the southern colonnade. These are the standing-places of the muballighs whose duty is to repeat the words of the imâm.

The Mosque has been rebuilt and increased in size by a succession of Arab and Turkish sultâns. It was almost entirely rebuilt as it now stands, by order of the Turkish Sultân Abdul Majîd, at a cost of seven hundred thousand pounds. One of the eunuchs, by name Abdul Wâhid Agha, named this sum in my presence, but I am convinced it must include the cost of the valuable jewels which Abdul Majîd is known to have deposited in the Hujra; failing that, the embezzlements of the officers in charge of the work must have been considerably above the regular scale. Stone was brought from the Wâdi-l'Agîg, to westward of the city, and in order to facilitate its transportation to the Mosque

* The Mekkan Haram is the only mosque which has no mihrâb. There the worshippers see the Kibla, that is the Kaaba, before their eyes.

precincts, the breach El 'Aynîya was made in the city wall. By this means carts were used for bringing in the stone columns and blocks which were too heavy to be carried by camels. The work took twelve years to complete (1848-1860), and during the whole of that time the five daily prayers were held in the Mosque without interruption. Each part of the building which was dismantled was rebuilt before another part was touched by the builders. The only parts which were left undisturbed were the Prophet's Hujra, and parts of the northern and western walls. The houses which formerly clustered about the walls of the Mosque were cleared away from all sides save the southern, and a pavement of stone was laid along the foot of the walls.

In normal circumstances the Mosque servants at El Medîna are more numerous than those at Mekka. The aghas, preachers, imâms, lecturers, muaddins, overseers, sweepers, doorkeepers, water-carriers, lamp cleaners, and others employed in the Haram, number more than a thousand men. Each receives a stipend from the waqfs, or endowment funds, of the Mosque; and in the Pilgrimage season they glean small presents from the hâjjis. Most of these men have some trade or business of their own, which the lightness of their duties in the Mosque leaves them ample time to practice.

The chief of this legion of helpers is the Shaykh el Haram, who is assisted by a deputy (nâib). The treasurer of the Mosque at the time of my visit was one of the eunuchs, but Aamir said "he has no work to do, for no money comes now—neither from Stambûl nor from anywhere else." In Turkish times, liberal salaries were sent from Constantinople for everyone employed in the Mosque service. When King Husayn had driven the Turks out of the Hijâz, he himself was

called upon to pay these salaries. El Husayn having been driven out in his turn by the Wahhâbîs, the stipends ceased entirely, and at the time of my sojourning in El Medîna the few servants who remained to the Mosque were living on their savings and on the alms of hâjjis. A number of deputations were sent from El Medîna to Mekka to implore Ibn Sa'ûd's assistance, but the best reply they ever got was his promise to visit El Medîna and make some provision for the Mosque servants there. The Sultân's usual reply to such requests was: "It is no trouble" (lâ yukâlif). That phrase became a byword in Mekka. If one enquired of a mosque servant why the lamps in the Haram were always dirty, he would reply: "We asked the Sa'ûdi to pay the wages of the cleaners to clean them, so he said to us: ' It is no trouble.' "

I was sitting in the Sultân's mejlis in El Husayn's former palace a few hours after the surrender of Jidda. One came in and said to him: "Shall we fire the guns in the fort?"

"Why fire the guns?" asked the Sultân.

"As a sign of our pleasure that Allah has conferred the victory upon us," said the other.

"Lâ yukâlif," said the Sultân, meaning "Do so, if it will please you, it is no matter to me."

Ultimately he did visit El Medîna and make provision for the mosque service there, but he reduced the number of the servants to less than two hundred.

The eunuchs of El Medîna were outwardly as unaffected by changes of fortune, and as aloof, as those of Mekka. They never solicited alms, though nearly everybody else in the city did so at one time or another; only, if money were offered to them, they would receive it with the air of one who collects money

for some charity in which he has no particular interest. It is commonly believed that the Aghas possess great riches which are secreted in their dark houses adjoining Bâb Jibrîl.

The corps of Aghas in El Medîna formerly numbered fifty. I doubt whether there were more than thirty of them employed in the Mosque at the time of which I write; but there was evidently no intention of allowing them to become extinct, as they had a number of little black boys in their houses who must have been recently purchased by or presented to them. These youths spent their time in study and in serving the elders, preparing to enter the Mosque service when they should arrive at years of discretion.

The employment of eunuchs in the Haram of El Medîna was instituted by the Sultân Salâh ed-Dîn el Ayyûbi—Saladin of the Crusaders.

XIV

PLACES OF VISITATION NEAR EL MEDÎNA

AAMIR was in daily expectation of becoming a father. Hitherto that blessing had not been vouchsafed to him. One day his wife became unwell, but without the expected result. "I must prepare an alms, and divide it among the poor," said he. Therefore we went that day to the market-place without the gate Bâb esh-Shûna, where live-stock and vegetables are sold. Arrived there, Aamir passed to and fro among the booths and the animals, and felt the ribs of many lank dollop-tailed sheep. Occasionally he cast his eye on a plump goat: goats were cheaper, but the importance of the occasion indicated the advisability of propitiating Providence with a sheep. At last he bought a ram of unappetising aspect, and tied it bleating to a post. On our return to the house he sent two urchins to bring the animal home. This they did with great glee, and stalled it in a dungeon full of lumber, behind the shop. On the next day the animal was duly sacrificed, and its flesh distributed among the poor. Nevertheless, the paternity of Aamir remained unaccomplished.

Said he to me: "To-morrow, in shâ Allah, let us visit our Lord Hamza, and there I will distribute alms."

Accordingly, on the morrow, soon after the dawn prayer, we hired a cubic wooden box, measuring little more than four feet in each dimension and mounted on wheels. and left the city by the Syrian Gate. Our

carriage, which was without springs, was drawn by a little Arab horse of a decrepit appearance. The driver sat on the shafts, and Aamir and I sat on two little shelves inside.

Passing under the hill Jebel Sal'a, we came to a tiny building, the dome of which had not received the attention of the Wahhâbîs. This, said Aamir, was the Kubbat-es-Sabk, which marks the spot where Muhammad's companions raced their horses. Soon afterwards we stopped in order to perform two prostrations in a little mosque at the right-hand side of the way. This building is said to mark the place where Muhammad assumed his coat of mail on the day of Ohod, though the historians assert that he performed that act in his house within the city. Proceeding further, we came to the extensive walled compound of the wireless telegraph, and shortly afterwards we passed through the gate in El Husayn's wall. Before us the track descended beside plantations of palm trees, and, crossing the gravelly bed of a watercourse, it led to a village. Close to the western end of this village stood a square stone building surmounted by a white dome and a minaret. This was the tomb mosque of the Prophet's uncle, Hamza. Less than half a mile behind the mosque and the village rose a great mountain of red granite —Jebel Ohod. This mass of bare rock extended five or six miles in an easterly direction, and along its base ran a wide, shallow watercourse. On the southern bank of the latter, walled plantations of date palms extended for a distance of two or three miles eastward.

Behind Jebel Ohod, and to westward of it, the palms of El 'Uyun glittered and faded by turns in the heat haze.

Arrived at the watercourse, we dismounted from the cart and climbed the further slope on foot. The village was almost deserted. Aamir told me that it is only populated during the Hajj months, when parties of pilgrims often hire the houses for a period of days. At other seasons the people of El Medînâ who own houses there occasionally make an excursion to them, accompanied by their friends, particularly on Hamza's birthday.

Leaving our sandals in the care of an old man of unkempt appearance who sat at the doorway, we entered Hamza's Mosque. From the covered porch we passed into a small unroofed court, in the middle of which was the tomb of one of the less famous martyrs of Ohod. Turning then to the left, we came to a large chamber with a domed roof. Here we performed our two prostrations in salutation of the Mosque. The walls of this chamber were decorated with a painted frieze, and on the floor were rush mats. There was a lofty archway in the wall opposite to that in which was the mihrâb. This archway, however, was blocked up with a wall of rough pieces of stone and mud, to a height of eight or nine feet. On the further side of this partition we could see the upper part of a square chamber which was open to the sky, where once had been a domed roof.

"Come!" said my companion. "Let us visit the tomb."

The inner archway being now blocked up, we were obliged to leave the mosque and pass round the walls to its western side. Here we found that the wall of the building had been torn down, so that the tomb-chamber, while no longer communicating with the mosque, by reason of the wall built in the archway,

was open to the jackal and the kite and to whatever else might desire to enter.

"I ask pardon of Allah!" exclaimed Aamir, as he saw this distressing sight.

On a bench near the breach sat three men, clothed in the Medînan dress. These spoke together in murmuring tones.

As we approached, I saw that in the centre of the chamber there was a tomb, covered with a green pall and surrounded by high iron railings. This was the tomb of Hamza. A smaller catafalque before it marked the burial-place of Abdulla bin Jahsh.

We saluted the sitters on the bench, and one of them rose to conduct us into the tomb-chamber.

"When happened this demolition?" I asked our guide.

He named the day: it was less than a week before. "By command of the Câdî," he added.

"By command of Ibn Belayhid?" I said.

"Ay, yes," said he, "the Câdî of the Mudayyina."

I had heard that Abdulla ibn Belayhid had arrived in El Medîna, though I had not chanced to see him. His journey was the outcome of Ibn Sa'ûd's long-deferred partial yielding to the Wahhâbî 'ulemâ, who had continually pressed him to destroy the tombs throughout the Hijâz, and particularly those at El Medîna. I had heard that Ibn Belayhid had demanded of the aghas to be admitted to the Prophet's Hujra at any hour in which he might chose to visit it; that he had entered the tomb-chamber at midnight, merely to examine it; that he was itching to have the Green Dome demolished, and the tomb also.

Certain it is that the Wahhâbîs would have long since thrown down the Dome, and rebuilt the Haram

so that it did not enclose the Prophet's tomb, if their leaders had not been deterred by the caution of the statesman more than they were urged by the zeal of the religious fanatic.

To lay violent hands on the Prophet's tomb is too dangerous a proceeding: such an act could hardly fail to arouse the entire Islamic world to drive its perpetrators out of the Holy Land. Yet, in truth, the Prophet himself directed that his tomb should be made inconspicuous.

Ibn Belayhid had come to El Medîna on a mission which could not be anything but delightful to a Wahhâbî. He was charged with the pious duty of superintending the destruction of all prominent tombs. His first difficulty was to find men who would consent to do such sacriligious work. The Wahhâbîs in El Medîna were very few, for Ibn Sa'ûd had withdrawn them from that city before its actual surrender. As for the Mudayyina themselves, they had no desire to visit a place the most revered object in which was the tomb of a man, unless it were for the purpose of making drastic alterations there, both architectural and ritualistic. Of actually doing these last they had been roundly accused in the newspapers of Egypt, Syria, and India, and Ibn Sa'ûd had been obliged to despatch many telegrams from Jidda to the four quarters of the Islamic world, assuring the Muslimîn that the Green Dome which sheltered the Prophet's tomb was intact, and that he pledged the lives and possessions of himself and his family that it should remain so, by the power of Allah.

Assisted by the Governor of the city and his minions, Ibn Belayhid had hired the services of a number of the Nakhawila, a despised community of peasant Arabs

who dwell in the palm groves without the city walls. These people are followers of the Shîa doctrine, and they are not allowed to dwell within the city. They may come in by day, however, and numbers of them sell vegetables in the open space near Bâb es-Salâm; but before sunset they are obliged to leave the town. The usual reason given for this by the Medînans is that they are incorrigible thieves, but there is also the feeling that they are a pollution to the Prophet's city. They are absolutely prohibited from entering the Haram, but it was the custom of the Government until recently to compel them to supply a guard about the Mosque to drive away the dogs. Temporary marriage, mut'a, which is disallowed by Sunni Islâm, is practised among them. Under this system the period of time during which the marriage is to last must be stated, and upon its expiration the parties must either re-marry, or separate. Were they to continue to live together without re-marriage they would be guilty of adultery. Under this form of marriage the children belong to their mother. Let it be repeated that mut'a marriage is illegal in orthodox Islamic law.

I was informed by a neighbour of Aamir in the Sûk that the Nakhawila hire out to the Persian pilgrims —who are Shî'is, like themselves—their houses with all that they contain, including their wives and daughters. The Nakhawila,* say the Medînans, will do anything for money: so now, directed by the Câdî, they demolished the tombs of the Muslimîn.

Everybody whom we met in the Mosque of Hamza spoke in hushed tones, as though fearful of being over-

* It may be that the Nakhawila are descended from those Arabs professing the Shî'ite doctrine, who were very numerous in El Medîna in the first century of the Hijra.

heard by Wahhâbîte spies. The Câdî had refused the request of the guardians of the tomb to be allowed to make a door in the breach, so that the latter might be closed, and they were now obliged to guard the place in turn by day and night, so as to prevent dogs and other unclean beasts from entering it.

The Battle of Ohod was fought on the 15th Shawal in the year 3 of the Hijra (A.D. 625). Three thousand unbelievers of Mekka, commanded by Abu Sufyân, marched against El Medîna. Accompanying them were their women, whom they had brought with them to be a handicap and determent against their fleeing from the Muslims.

While the Muslims who dwelt among the palm trees came rallying into the city, Muhammad and his companions sat in council, debating whether they should go forth and give battle on the plain, or await the onset of the Mekkans where they were. Muhammad's own view was that they should fortify themselves in the city, and if the unbelievers came against them they would kill them at the entering in of the narrow streets, while the women assisted by throwing missiles from the roofs.

A party of the Prophet's companions, however, urged him to lead them against the enemy. Thereupon he rose and donned his coat of mail, while his companions rallied the rank and file. Then the Muslims, numbering one thousand men, sallied forth from the city, with Muhammad at their head.

The opposing forces met at the foot of Ohod, on the elevated ground called 'Aynayn, which forms the northern bank of the watercourse at that point. Both sides fought with great tenacity, but the Mekkans were driven back towards their women. Seeing this, a party

of the Muslims, disobeying the orders of Muhammad, left their own position and went in pursuit of the foe, crying, "To the spoil! To the spoil!" This nearly brought disaster on the Prophet and his followers; for the horsemen of their enemies managed to reach a position behind them, whence they closed upon them from the rear, killing seventy of their number. But the Prophet and his followers would not be overcome. The thought which unfeared their souls as they advanced against their foes was, that within the shadow of their thirsting swords lay Paradise. "I will be the first to smell the sweet odours of Paradise," cried Anas ibn En-Nadhar, and charging among the enemy he fought until he was killed. The Prophet mortally wounded one Abu Khalaf, and was himself wounded in the cheek and the lower lip, one of his teeth being smashed. Hamza and over seventy others were slain, but eventually the Muslims fought their opponents to a stand-still, when the surviving Mekkans withdrew with their women.

Having repeated sundry prayers as directed by our guide, and having distributed small sums of money to several beggars who crouched near Hamza's tomb, we left the Mosque and went to visit the stony mounds which mark the graves of some of the other martyrs of Ohod. These are enclosed by a low stone wall. Here we repeated further litanies with our guide.

Behind the Mosque lay the ruins of a little domed building, which is said to stand upon the spot where Muhammad's tooth was broken in the battle. It is known as the Dome of the Tooth. Higher up the slope to eastward was another little mosque, marking the place where Hamza fell. The building now lay in ruins, having been torn down by the Wahhâbîs.

Throughout these visitations the muzawwir dis-

pensed largesse with greater liberality than did the hâjji. Paternity, it would seem, is a blessing worth paying for. Nor was the good man yet done with almsgiving, for a bevy of laughing peasant girls who ran in the dust behind our cart as we returned to the city also received a gift for Allah's sake.

That night a son was born to Aamir.

I was sitting with him on the bench before his shop next morning, after the dawn prayer, when a thin youth of a wild and dishevelled appearance came pacing quickly down the street, going toward the Haram. As he came abreast of us the youth stopped suddenly, but he uttered no salutation.

"This is the house in which is the new-born child," said he, in the manner of one making a statement of fact. "Yes," he added, "there is a new-born child here."

"Praise be to Allah!" said Aamir, with quiet fervour.

"Give a piastre," commanded the dervish.

Aamir at once handed him a coin. He received it without looking at it. He was eyeing the house with an intent look.

"Allah make the child blessed to thee, and peace be upon thee!" he said, and so departed as swiftly as he had come.

The youth, Kâmil by name, was one who spent his time in wandering purposefully about the city on unknown errands, and in sitting or praying in the Haram. When he became tired he laid himself down and slept wherever he might be, on a bench in a coffee-house, in the dust of some quiet courtyard, in the porch of a mosque, or in the Haram. He had no other food than such as was given to him in charity; and he frequently entered, unbidden, a house where a feast

was being held, and sat down to eat with the guests. Such an act was regarded as a favour by the master of the house, for this youth was "Kâmil, with whom is Allah." In Europe the poor youth would have been called rather "Mad Kâmil." I was told that he sometimes refused to accept money which was offered to him, and this was a sign that the money had been acquired by unlawful means.

"Tell me, how did he know there was a new-born child here?" I asked Aamir.

"Allah it was Who gave him the knowledge; no other," he replied.

One day I left the city alone on foot, in order to visit the mosque of Kuba. This building lies among plantations of palm, sidr, and pomegranate trees, some four miles to south-westward of the city. I took the precaution of leaving my jubba and waist-shawl behind, so as to carry as small a spoil as possible to any thieves who might accost me in the way.

My route lay from the Manâkha, up the watercourse to Bâb Kuba in the southern part of the outer wall. This gate stands on the left or south-western bank of the wâdi, and the wall is carried thence across the bed of the watercourse on arches, which latter are closed by strong iron bars.

Without that gate the track led across a plain of sandy clay. A few half-ruined houses were scattered along both sides of the way; and to westward the black slope of the harra rose gently above me. On the summit of this slope the Bâb el 'Anbarîya, and the dome and minarets of the Turkish mosque which stands beside it, showed clear-cut against the sky. Further westward, in the middle of the harra, stood a small square fort of Turkish construction.

At some two miles distance from the city wall I came to the first of the palm groves. Here I overtook one who drove before him a donkey laden with empty pannier baskets. As he returned my salutation this man asked—Was it my intention to visit the Mesjid Kuba? He was a man of middle age, slight-bearded, and dressed in the townsman's old travelling clothes.

Upon enquiring as to his destination, I learnt that he would gather rutab (new dates) from a plantation near Kuba, which belonged to his family.

"What think you of El Medîna?" he asked presently.

"El Medîna, mâ shâ Allah, is a fine city," I said. "It pleases me much, but it appears that its inhabitants are very few."

"It was better in the past years," said he. "Wallah, better! El Medîna, in the days of the Turks, was teeming with people. They came to us from Syria, from Turkey, from Egypt, from India, from Bokhâra, from Morocco, and from every part of the world, and they dwelt among us round about the Prophet's Hujra. Then were we in great blessedness. For money was plentiful, and merchandise came to us from Damascus, and fruits also. Everyone had a bountiful provision. And praise to God Who gives provision to whom He will, and witholds from whom He will."

"Then what is the reason for this reversal of fortune?" I asked. "For cannot the palms and orchards of El Medîna suffice a great multitude; and is not water here abundant; and do not flocks and herds and samn come to you from the Eastern desert, and rice from El Hind?"

"But El Medîna was besieged," said he. "Twice she was besieged, and her orchards destroyed and her houses demolished. The people fled away. Have you

not seen their houses?—in ruins now. When El Husayn rebelled against the Sultân they went forth the city in thousands, fleeing. They went to Damascus, to Yanbua, to Hâil, and I know not where. And when the Wahhâbîs came the remainder fled—all save a few."

He went on to tell me of Fakhri Pasha's measures to repel Husayn's Arabs who laid siege to the city; of his patrols and his sorties, and his orders to the civil population. My companion understood method, and appreciated its value. His name was Abdul Majîd es-Sa'îdi, and his family were muzawwirs of the Indians.

I said: "One of my friends in Mekka, Sayyid Abdul Fattâh, desired me to enquire for a man from India; his name was Abdulla el Muslimâni. Do you know a man of that name?"

"I think not," said Abdul Majîd. "What is his appearance?"

"He was a man great of age, and his beard was long and white. He used to sit in the Haram after the times of prayer, and he loved to listen to the chanting of the Korân," I said.

"No, wallah, I know him not," said he, "you said he was a Hindi?"

"He came from El Hind," I said, "but it would seem that he was not of the Hindi nationality. He was a foreigner who sojourned in El Hind, and there he embraced the religion of Islâm. After that he came to El Medîna."

"I have not heard of him," said Abdul Majîd, "but I will ask concerning him."

Of Sayyid Abdul Fattâh he said: "Formerly he was here. He has a house and garden beyond Kuba, but they are fallen to ruin."

Our ways separated before we reached the mosque of Kuba.

I subsequently met Abdul Majîd in the Haram on two occasions, but he had been unable to learn anything of Abdulla el Muslimâni. Whether Abdul Fattâh's Inkilîzi was really an Englishman or not I cannot say. If he was alive in El Medîna during my sojourn there, he must have been bedridden; for, had he been able to go to the Haram, I must have seen him at one time or another. There are many men of fair complexion in El Medîna, men of Turkish, Syrian, and Circassian descent. Among these I several times saw an old white-bearded man whom I thought might be the man I sought; but on enquiry I learnt that he was a Turk of considerable learning who had formerly taught Hanafi law in the Haram.

Some of the gardens close to the village of Kuba were still being tended, and these, I saw, were green with growing vegetables and clover. Further out on the plain, however, the fields were as smooth and bare as sand of the sea-shore left uncovered by the receding tide. The ground had long lain untilled, and rain and wind had reduced it to the state of the surrounding deserts. Along the edges of all the fields, however, grew palm, tamarisk, and sidr trees.

The mosque of Kuba is a square crenelated building surmounted by a minaret, standing on rising ground among the plantations. Scattered round about it are the hovels which form the village.

As I reached the mosque, a muaddin began to chant the adân for the sunset prayer. A number of water-jars stood beside the door, and dipping one of these into a stone water-tank, I performed ablutions and entered the mosque.

The congregation, including the imâm and myself, numbered eight persons, three of whom were boys. Nobody sat long after prayers; there was no chanting of the Korân, no chatting together in the cool of the evening. These poverty-stricken wretches crept away sadly to their hovels. Only the imâm, seeing that I intended to look about the building, asked me to lock the door and take the key to him when I had finished. Then, having pointed out his house to me, he went away. It seemed that I had impoverished my appearance to some purpose.

The interior of the mosque was open to the sky, save for a narrow colonnade which surrounded the court. In the centre of the latter there was a stone water-tank, at one side of which stood a little dome raised on four stone pillars. This dome covers the spot on which Muhammad's camel knelt at the end of his flight from Mekka. On the opposite side of the water-tank there was a small square space of ground, enclosed by a short wooden fence, in which some green shrubs were growing.

When Muhammad came to El Medîna, fleeing from his enemies at Mekka, the Muslims of the former city went out with a joyful clamour to meet him. They surrounded his camel as he rode across the western harra, while he directed the animal towards the nearest collection of dwellings. This was Kuba; and here the Prophet alighted before the house of a grandson of the Arabian poet Amr el Kays, named Kalthûm. This Kalthûm possessed a threshing-floor, and on that spot the Prophet laid the foundations of the Mosque of Kuba—the first mosque ever built.

The Muslim divines are unanimous in the opinion that the Mesjid Kuba is that described in Chapter

Repentance as being "a mosque founded upon piety from its first day."

Like all the other historical buildings of the Hijâz, the Mosque of Kuba has been many times rebuilt by successive khalîfas and sultâns. Its last rebuilding occurred nearly a hundred years ago, after the first Wahhâbî invasion.

To south-westward of the mosque there are two smaller buildings. These are known as the Mosque of Fâtima and the Mosque of 'Arafa. In the former Muhammad's daughter is fabled to have sat grinding barley; and from the site of the latter the Prophet is said to have clearly seen the plain of 'Arafa and the pilgrims performing the Hajj there. The domes of both buildings had been thrown down. This demolition was done by the ignorant zealots composing the Wahhâbî force which had besieged El Medîna. It is not to be laid to the Câdi's account. In the Wahhâbî view, however, a building in which supplication is habitually made to saints is as meet for destruction as though it sheltered a tomb. Even the Prophet's birthplace at Mekka had been destroyed; but that and similar acts of vandalism occurred before the arrival of Ibn Sa'ûd at Mekka.

To westward of the Mosque of Kuba, at a distance of twenty or thirty yards, lies the well Bir el Arîs. This well is forty feet deep. It is named after a Jew of El Medîna who owned it in the time of Muhammad. It is also known as the Well of the Spitting, for the Prophet is fabled to have expectorated into it, causing its waters, which had been brackish, to become sweet.

A third name of this well is the Well of the Seal, for the Khalîfa Othmân is said to have dropped Muhammad's ring into it by accident, whence it was never

recovered. About the well there is a garden of fruit trees.

A conduit, or gutter, carries the water to a tank, and a second conduit brings water from another well close by. A youth of the village who conducted me to the several points of interest would have me observe this miracle—that one conduit contained sweet water, while the other contained brackish water, yet both streams were fed by wells a few yards from one another. The Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—said he, had spat into the one well, but the other had received no such attention.

I was told, however, by one learned in the Traditions, that the hadîth which records this alleged act of Muhammad is not attested by the more reliable compilers of collections of Traditions. It is probably an invention of the catch-penny miracle-mongers to whom every new fable brings gifts from the more credulous hâjjis.

Having seen these things I pursued my way back to the city in the dusk of the evening.

On several Thursday afternoons I went with Aamir or other acquaintances to visit the cemetery El Bakîa. This place is enclosed by a mud wall, and measures some 200 yards by 120 yards. It lies close to the eastern wall of the city. Ten thousand of the Prophet's Companions are said to be buried in it.

When I entered the Bakîa the sight which I saw was as it were a town which had been razed to the ground. All over the cemetery nothing was to be seen but little indefinite mounds of earth and stones, pieces of timber, iron bars, blocks of stone, and a broken rubble of cement and bricks, strewn about. It was like the broken remains of a town which had been de-

molished by an earthquake. Against the western wall lay great stacks of old wooden planks, and others of stone blocks, and of iron bars and railings. This was some of the scattered material, which had been collected and stacked in order. A few narrow paths had been cleared in the rubble, so that visitors might make their way to the further parts of the cemetery; but other signs of order there were none. All was a wilderness of ruined building material and tombstones—not ruined by a casual hand, but raked away from their places and ground small.

Demolished and gone were the great white domes which formerly marked the graves of the members of Muhammad's family, of the Third Khalîfa, Othmân, of the Imâm Mâlik, and of others. Lesser monuments had suffered a like fate, and even the little cages of jerîd sticks, with which the poor cover the graves of their dead, had all been crushed and thrown aside, or burnt.

We went forward to view some of the mounds which now marked the tombs of the early Muslims who had made history. As we walked Aamir murmured continually "I ask pardon of God!" and "There is no power and no strength but in God!" Those few guardians of the tombs who remained stood or sat motionless with faces of stone. They asked no alms, and spoke no word above a whisper, though there were no Wahhâbîs near save two of Ibn Subhân's black slaves at the gate. But some of the Nakhawila were still occupied there in raking out serviceable pieces of wood and other material from among the ruins. These Nakhawila might not bury their own dead among the saints in the Bakîa, but now, under Wahhâbîte direction, they had thrown down the tombs of the orthodox Muslimîn.

We walked up a narrow path which had been cleared in the rubbish, towards Othmân's tomb at the eastern side of the graveyard. As we paced carefully, there met us a party of Indians coming from the tomb of Othmân. He who walked at their head was an old man with a long grey beard. As he walked, with head held erect, his eyes wavered neither to right nor to left. Straight before him he gazed, and tears fell from his eyes in a ceaseless stream. Those who followed him glanced quickly at us in passing, and then looked away again.

We had come upon a slight rise in the ground, and now I saw the cause of the old man's grief. There on the ground before us was a long thin erection, scarcely more than six inches high. It was apparently made of a wooden framework, with rough pieces of tin nailed upon it. This was the tomb of Othmân, the Third Khalîfa. A mound of earth would have been a better monument.

Beside it sat a large-turbaned Indian, chanting the Korân. Another sat near him, sobbing.

Behind the hill Jebel Sal'a, to north-westward of the city, there are five little mosques—El Masâjid el Khamsa—scattered in the valley. One of these is known as the Mosque of the Two Kiblas. It is related that a party of the Bani Salma were praying towards Jerusalem in this mosque when one came in and told them that the Kibla had been changed to Mekka. It had but newly been revealed to Muhammad that the Kibla of the Muslimîn was thenceforth to be the Kaâba. Upon hearing this, these tribesmen of Bani Salma turned about and completed their prayers with their faces turned towards Mekka.

Underneath this mosque there is a well which is reached by means of a flight of steps.

PLACES OF VISITATION NEAR EL MEDÎNA

The tomb-mosque of Shaykh Ali el 'Arîdh lies on the eastern harra, at a distance of some five miles from the Bâb el Bakîa. A rough track leads to it, and Aamir and I rode out on donkeys one day to visit it. The mosque is built as strongly as a small fortress, with massive stone walls and an iron door. In normal times the imâm lives in an upper storey with his family, and the place has been built to withstand the assaults of thieving Bedouins.

A hole had been torn by the Wahhâbîs in the wall at the western side of the building, and through this we entered. Inside we found several tombs, all of which had been partly demolished. Several large cut-glass chandeliers, which had formerly been suspended over the graves, now lay smashed to pieces on the ground. Having saluted Shaykh Âli in his grave, and repeated the Fâtiha, we mounted and rode home again.

On our way we passed by the Mesjid el Ijâba. Here Muhammad prayed to God to grant him three requests. The first and second were that He would not destroy the Muslim nation by thirst nor by drowning. These two requests were granted. The third was that the Muslims might not fight among themselves; but this was not granted.

Among many historical small buildings in the plain about El Medîna is the Mosque of the Table, to eastward of the city. Here, say the fable-mongers, God sent down the table loaded with food to Jesus Christ. This incident is related in the Korân, Chapter *The Table*, but no mention is made of El Medîna; nor do the commentators and historians say that it occurred at El Medîna. The Korânic passage is as follows:—

"When the disciples said: 'O 'Isa son of Mary! Is thy Lord able to send down unto us a table from heaven?'

"He answered: 'Fear God,* if ye be true believers.'

"Said they: 'We wish to eat from it, that our hearts may be at rest; and that we may know that Thou hast spoken truth† unto us, and that we may be witnesses thereof.'

"Said 'Isa son of Mary: 'O God, our Lord! send down unto us a table from heaven, that it may be a feast‡ unto us: unto the first of us, and unto the last of us:§ and a sign from Thee.§§ Provide Thou for us,§§§ for Thou art the Best of Providers.'

"God said: 'Verily I am sending it down unto you. Therefore, whoever among you shall disbelieve hereafter, I will surely inflict upon him a punishment such as I inflict upon no other creature.' "

The Two Jalâls, quoting Ibn 'Abbâs, tell us that "The angels brought it [the Table] down from heaven: and upon it were seven loaves and seven fishes. Then they ate of it until they were filled." This appears to be another version of the Feeding of the Five Thousand.

In different parts of the Manâkha there are several little mosques. These are cool silent places in the heat

* i.e. without asking for signs and wonders.

† In claiming to be a prophet.

‡ That the day of the year on which the table is sent down may be kept as a feast day for ever.

§ Those who come after us.

§§ A sign of Thy power, and of my prophetship.

§§§ Provide Thou this table for us.

of the day. All are swept and garnished, and have grass mats on the floor. Some of them have small gardens beside them, and green branches of trees may be seen through the iron-barred windows by the sitters within. Among these mosques are the Mesjid el Ghamâma, Mesjid Ali, Mesjid Abi Bakr, Mesjid Mâlik íbn Anas, and the Mesjid Umar.

XV

EL MEDÎNA TO YANBUA

FROM the roof on which I slept a great part of the Manâkha could be seen. On some mornings, when I rose from my bed or when I returned from the Mosque, I saw that that harbour of caravans was full to overflowing with the shugdufs of the hâjjis. On the morrow, perhaps, I would see no sign of life there: the place would be as deserted and silent as the untrodden wastes of the desert.

The caravans bringing Egyptians, Syrians, Turks, and Moors from Yanbua, commonly remained eight days at El Medîna; while those from Mekka, bringing Malays, Indians, Bokhârans, and others, usually stayed only five days. The hâjjis from Mekka made the whole journey to and from El Medîna by land; but most of those who came by Yanbua returned to that port, and went down to Jidda by sea.

During their stay in El Medîna, the hâjjis lodged in the houses of their muzzawwirs; but a few of them lived in their shugdufs in the Manâkha, in order to save themselves expense. Penurious dervishes spent their days in the Haram, and their nights in secluded nooks in the public streets or in the old alms-houses. There were several of the latter in different parts of the city. They are bequests in mortmain for the benefit of poor travellers. Food was formerly supplied in some of them, in addition to lodging, but in the revolutions of time the funds with which this had been

purchased have ceased. Such funds were derived in most cases from the rent of dwelling houses in El Medîna, bequeathed for the purpose, or from the revenue of estates or houses in various parts of the Muslim world. No man knows the number and value of all the waqfs which have been bequeathed to Mekka and El Medîna in the thirteen centuries of Islâm. There is no Islâmic province, from China to Morocco, which does not contain property, or the decayed dust of property, which was once bequeathed to the Haramayn. What and where many of these bequests were, how they ceased to exist as waqfs, by whom embezzled or how decayed, no one knows, save in a few individual cases.

I observed that many parties of Indians, some of them including women, camped in the public streets. These did not devote most of their time to begging, as many solitary poor men did, but wisely turned their energies to washing themselves, to searching for certain tiny members of creation in one another's hair, and to carefully preparing their food. They joked lazily with one another while doing these things, and on the approach of one whom they knew, they would rise and hold his hand softly for long minutes, while they exchanged smiling remarks with him. Some of these poor Indians wore great beautiful turbans of yellow or pink muslin, while the remainder of their garments were in rags. Just such a contrast as this was the beautiful Green Dome of the Prophet, which overtopped the crumbling hovels of his followers. When any person of an affluent and benevolent appearance passed near a party of these Indians, one of their number would rise and beg of him, with a smile or a whine as the occasion seemed to demand.

The first day of the pilgrimage month, Du-l Hijja, dawned while I was still in El Medîna. The Manâkha and all the streets of the city had been almost deserted for several days, for the hâjjis were rallying to Mekka. On the 3rd of Du-l Hijja (14th June) the last caravan left El Medîna for Mekka. This was a party of Medînans mounted on deluls. They would ride by fast stages, and reach 'Arafa in time for the Hajj.

I had arranged to travel to Yanbua in the company of two Medînan youths, Hamdi and Abdul Khâlig, who were petty merchants. Now that the days of my sojourning in Arabia were fast approaching their end, my desire had been to ride to the coast on a delul as expeditiously as might be. But my companions had skins of samn and bundles of carpets which they must take with them. Accordingly we were obliged to hire burden camels.

A few minutes before the hour of el'asr on the 18th of June, Aamir and I loaded my baggage on a camel which had been couched for that purpose in the open space near Bâb es-Salâm. Leaving the Bedouin in charge of the animal to attach it to the kâfila, we then made our way to the Great Mosque, where we performed the afternoon prayer and repeated the salutation to the Prophet. That duty completed, we left the Mosque and proceeded towards the Egyptian Gate. The city was now almost devoid of inhabitants, for, besides the foreign hâjjis, large numbers of the Medînans had gone southward to Mekka for the Pilgrimage. More than half of the shops in the Sûk were closed, their owners having taken loads of merchandise on camels to sell in Mekka.

During my sojourn in El Medîna I had searched in vain for a good supply of the dates for which she is

famous. The dates being sold in the market at that time were two years old, for the most recent crop had been gathered by the besieging Wahhâbîs. The owners of the trees had been unable to go forth from the city to bring in the fruit. Those old dates in the market were infested with little brown insects.

The date trade of El Medîna is of considerable importance, and quantities of the fruit are exported to Syria, Egypt, India, and other countries. A number of merchants obtain their livelihood solely by buying dates for export. In El Medîna the dates are stored in skins. In the Muhammadan countries, a handful of the dates of El Medîna is regarded as a gift fit for a prince, for they confer a great blessing on the eater. There are said to be seventy varieties of dates grown in the groves surrounding the city. The best sort is a very large date called El 'Anbari, which has a fine flavour. It is extremely scarce and expensive. The second is El Chalabi, a large sweet date. This, being the best of the more plentiful varieties, is the one most in demand among the hâjjis. They take large quantities away with them as presents to friends. The third sort is El Halwa, a very sweet date which is much in favour with the Medînans themselves. The fourth, El Baydh, is egg-shaped, as its name implies. The fifth, Es-Sukkari, is a rather small date, but soft and sweet, which dissolves in the mouth like a piece of sugar. The sixth is a yellow date, Et-Tabarjali. The seventh, El Khudrîya, remains greenish in colour when ripe. The eighth, El Jâwi, is a black date which induces great thirst. The ninth, El-Lubâna, is almost white. The tenth, El Fanad, is red. Other varieties are El Birni, El Ajwa, Esh-Shukrâ, El Wahshi, Es-Sayhâni, and El Maktûmi.

I had purchased two small tins of Chalabi dates to give to friends in Cairo, and now, as I passed down the Sûk with Aamir for the last time, I looked in the little shops for some more of these. All that remained, however, were Birni and Halwa dates in a worm-eaten condition.

We crossed the Manâkha, and passed down the broad straight street which leads to the Bâb el'Anbarîya. On our right we passed the house of Ibn Subhân, and the Egyptian Soup-kitchen, and on our left the old Turkish barracks. Save for the slaves lounging before Ibn Subhân's door, the long dusty street was deserted.

Passing through the great gate, we found our caravan halted without. A little middle-aged 'Arab, Ibrâhîm, and his companion, a youth named Suwaylim, sat scratching in the sand with their sticks. They were of the Ahâmida branch of the Harb Tribe.

We gave them the salutation of peace, which they, rising, returned. The two merchants had not yet arrived, so we sat on the ground to eat a water-melon which I had in my baggage. I asked Aamir, would he not like to come with me to Egypt and see the sights of civilisation.

"No, O sir," said he, "my wish is to stay beside the Hujra of the Prophet—Allah bless him and give him peace—until I die, and then I will be buried in El Bakîa, in shâ Allah."

On a former day, sitting in the cloisters of the Mosque, he had told me that his father, being then great of age, had seen the Prophet in a dream. In his dream it seemed to the old man that he stood before the Hujra, and the Prophet, together with Abu Bakr, Umar, and the Lady Fâtima, were standing within.

And they beckoned to him, and said: "Come thou and dwell beside us."

"The very next morning," said Aamir, "my father sold all his possessions, and, taking me and my mother and my sister with him, he mounted the sea to Alexandria. And after we had reached Mekka and performed the Hajj, he brought us all to El Medîna."

His parents and his sister were now dead: they were all buried in El Bakîa. Aamir's only journeyings now were to Mekka, whenever his hâjjis desired him to accompany them thither at their expense.

El Medîna is a favourite place of residence with the Moors, for the reason that the Imâm Mâlik, whose system they follow, is buried in the Bakîa.

Presently Hamdi and Abdul Khâlig issued from the gate carrying, one a little basket of provisions, and the other a clay waterbottle.

I had remunerated Aamir for the hospitality which I had received in his house on a similar scale to that which I had employed with Abdurrahmân in Mekka. This matter was agreed upon between us beforehand, the custom differing in this respect from that obtaining in Mekka, where the amount of the mutawwif's recompense is usually left to the decision of the hâjji. For the visit to the Hujra I gave Aamir a guinea. He gave thanks to Allah with dignity but without enthusiasm, as he probably would have done had the amount been more or less than it was.

I was sorry to see the last of Aamir. He was a kind and dignified person, and in the present general misfortune he was resigned, and steadfast to remain in the city whence so many had fled in panic. He placed his arm round my shoulders briefly in the Arabian embrace at parting, and with a last wish for my safe

arrival in my country, he went back into the city, hastening a little in order to reach the Haram in time for the sunset prayer.

The two merchants already sat their beasts.

"Mount, O hâjji!" said Ibrâhîm in the suddenly-busy Bedouin manner.

I climbed to the back of my camel, and the Bedouin led forward. The string of beasts slowly unwound into a straight line, and headed westward.

We passed along by the stone wall of the railway compound, and leaving that behind us, we slowly climbed the black slope of the western harra. At the bottom of the declivity to our left stood a number of isolated houses surrounded by orchards. Farther out on the plain the palm groves stretched for several miles southward. After nearly an hour's ride from the city gate we came to the Mosque of 'Irwa. The sun had now set, and the mountains to westward appeared as monstrous masses of jet upraised before a screen of old gold. Here we halted and dismounted. Looking down the long black slope up which we had toiled, I saw in the distance four slender minarets: three of them were white, and the other was striped with horizontal dark bands. In their midst the Green Dome was barely discernible, and the small minaret of Bâb er-Rahma could no longer be seen. At the northern and western sides of this group of minarets lay masses of flat-topped houses, while from the south and south-east the black and yellow spaces of the desert seemed to break in green surf all about their bases, sending a narrow stream all round the city. Through the up-flung greenness, glimpses of the white city wall appeared at intervals.

Having performed the sunset prayer, we descended

on foot the steep rocky slope, El Mudarraj, into the Wâdi-l 'Agîg. A small village which formerly flourished at this point was now deserted. Climbing the farther slope, we left the wâdi and proceeded westward through a succession of rocky valleys. Curled up on the back of my camel, I managed to sleep most of the night, and upon waking, an hour before dawn, I found the two merchants and the Bedouins still asleep on their animals. When they woke none of them could at first recognise the landmarks about us, but after a little discussion the Bedouins realised where they were. It appeared that, being led by a non-stop sort of camel, our caravan had kept moving throughout the night while we all slept. Unfortunately, the leading animal had not taken the best road. We did not reach Bir Darwish until some two hours before noon—a march of sixteen hours from El Medîna.

Having unloaded our animals, we proceeded to prepare a meal of rice and samn. The Bedouins were sent to collect brushwood for the fire. The merchants spread several beautiful carpets on the sand under an acacia tree, and on these we made ourselves comfortable. A cool breeze blew from the westward, and I contrasted the delightful temperateness of the atmosphere with the terrible heat which I had experienced here on my way up from Mekka.

Immediately after the sunset prayer we mounted and moved off. Our way led through the Wâdi-sh Shuhadâ. Marching all night, we came to El Mudhîg after sunrise, having taken fourteen hours for the journey from Bir Darwîsh.

El Mudhîg is a circular plain some two miles in diameter. It is enclosed on all sides by high mountains. The wâdi bed runs through its southern side, and

passing through a gap in the mountains to westward, flows down to the coast. The watercourse westward is called Wâdi Safra. At El Mudhîg we found a few Arabs dwelling in huts, or tents, constructed partly of old hair-cloth and partly of rushes. These people cultivate durra on the plain, where the soil is a sandy loam. They obtain water from a spring and from a well.

At el'asr we left El Mudhîg, and descending into the watercourse, we passed into the narrow entrance of the Wâdi Safra. The breeze had now ceased, or was shut off from us by the towering ramparts of blackened granite among whose bases we travelled. The narrow watercourse extended westward between these walls of rock, which rose above it to a height of from two thousand to four thousand feet. Many a bloody encounter has occurrred in that place. The most famous, perhaps, is the battle fought in 1811 between the Wahhâbîs and a Turko-Egyptian force commanded by Tusûn Pasha, the son of Muhammad Ali, Ruler of Egypt, in which the Wahhâbîs were completely victorious. After we had crawled slowly forward in the burning atmosphere for an hour, the valley became somewhat wider. In another hour we passed by the small domed mosque of Abdur-Rahîm el Bur'i, an Arabian poet. This lies at the foot of the mountain on the left-hand side of the Wâdi.

On the opposite side lay the village of El Judayyida; and above it, on the hillside, was a small Turkish fort. From this point a grove of palm trees extended along the right-hand side of the watercourse for a distance of nearly two miles. My companions, the merchants, dismounted and ran to the village in order to purchase

rutab (fresh-gathered dates), but the Bedouins did not halt their camels.

Beyond the village of El Judayyida the wâdi bears to the right, and here we descended a steep declivity beside the palm plantations. A number of springs supply the place with water, which is led in little channels to all the palm gardens. All this part of the wâdi is known as Bughâz el Judayyida.

At sunset we halted for a few minutes in order to give the merchants time to rejoin us. Then, proceeding further, we came to the fort of El Hamra, some five or six miles from the village of El Judiyyida. Here there is a small village and some cultivation of vegetables. We passed by the place in the darkness, and marched westward along a wide shallow watercourse. The hills which now bordered our path were of comparatively low altitude. Later we left the wâdi, and came into a rocky undulating country. Before dawn we reached Bir Sa'îd, where we encamped. Here we found several stone huts, and a well of bad water.

In the heat of the day I was now in a sort of dazed lethargy. I had lived as a hâjji in Arabia for more than a year, and the hardships of that life had blunted my sensibilities. While in El Medîna I had thought of visiting Hâil, but I now knew that I should have found little pleasure in the journey, unless I could have recuperated my physical powers before setting out.

We left Bir Sa'îd at el'asr, and travelled among low rocky hills for two hours, when we emerged into the spacious coastal plain. Far to our right rose the great dark peak of Jebel Rodhwa, and nearer lay a large yellow sand dune.

Ibrâhîm had told us that we should reach the en-

campment of his tribe that night, and that we should be his guests for the Feast of Sacrifices.

Now, as we proceeded across the plain, we heard the barking of dogs and the bleating of goats in the evening dusk. I fell asleep on my camel, but was shortly awakened by the animal's stopping. We had reached the encampment of the Ahâmida. Now we dismounted before Ibrâhîm's tent. The poor Bedouin came from his woman's apartment with a wooden bowl full of camel's milk, and bade me and the merchants to drink. Having taken a refreshing draught of this, I crawled beneath the hair-cloth shelter and fell asleep.

At dawn I awoke much refreshed, and proceeded to inspect my surroundings. Our tent was one of a half-score which were pitched in line on the open plain. The ground here was a fine dust of sandy loam, and the only vegetation was camel-grass—a weed which needs scarcely any water. Flocks of goats grazed near the tents, but the camel herds were not in sight. Ibrâhîm sat in the tent preparing his morning coffee: his wife handed him the water-filled coffee-pot and the berries, from under the screen which separated the harîm apartment from the open part of the tent. We drank the good man's coffee, and ate of his dates and our bread from El Medîna.

This day being the Feast of Sacrifices, when the pilgrims slay their meat offerings at Mina, we should not have eaten before performing the Prayer of Festival had we been punctiliously observant of religious forms. But we were now the guests of Bedouins, and among these punctiliousness in such matters is rare.

As the morning advanced, all assembled in a space of ground which had been marked out with stones.

Here we formed in rows, to repeat the Salât el'îd (Prayer of Festival)—a special prayer ordained to be repeated on the Feast of Breaking the Ramadhân Fast and on the Feast of Sacrifices. A handsome old grey-beard took up his position as imâm of the gathering, but when he came to begin the prayers he could not remember whether he ought to say "Allah Akbar!" seven times *before* the "intention," or after it. A general argument ensued, in the course of which it became evident that the old man was so extremely doubtful about every detail of the service that it would be better if he did not attempt to conduct it. He stepped back into the front row of worshippers without any loss of dignity, and everybody present invited the two merchants and myself by turns to lead the prayers. I declined the honour for myself, and helped them to push Hamdi gently into the imâm's position. Finding himself there, he promptly went through the rite with the townsman's facility; and thereafter, everybody having shaken everybody else by the hand and wished them a blessed feast, we returned to the tents with hungry expectation.

After having lived on scanty commons for the last three days, the merchants and I were now to have food pressed upon us in great quantity. First of all we sat down to eat in Ibrâhîm's tent. Assisted by two other Bedouins, he brought in an enormous tin dish filled with a great heap of boiled rice on which was deposited about half of a dismembered goat. This they placed on the ground, and going out again, they came back with another similar dish. Then in response to Ibrâhîm's brief invitation "Come lads, eat!" all those present, being about half the men of the encampment, seated themselves around the two trenchers, and saying

"Bismillah er-Rahmân er-Rahîm," began to eat. The Bedouins on either side of me broke off pieces of meat from the joints and piled them on the rice before me. I returned the compliment, and by passing some of the tit-bits which I received to others, I managed to keep the pile of provender in front of me within respectable dimensions. I thought, doubtless this will be my last meal before I reach Yanbua on the morrow. Therefore I did not hesitate to avail myself to the full of Ibrâhîm's hospitality. Seeing which, a look of quiet satisfaction came into the eye of my host. By means of frequent brief glances in his direction, I observed that he continually turned an anxious eye towards his townsmen guests; but as soon as he saw that they were little behind the Bedouins in their eager use of the right hand, he looked anxious no longer.

Thinking of my coming journey, I ate for to-day and for to-morrow. I was to regret that I had done so, however, for scarcely had the exclamations of "El hamdu Lillah" ceased in Ibrâhîm's tent, than other Bedouins came to invite everybody to a second feast a few tents further down the line. There was no refusing, so with my companions I assumed the decorous expression of a hungry man who is invited to dine, and accompanied our new hosts to their feast.

We found that it was already spread in the tent of that old shaykh who had unsuccessfully essayed to lead us at prayers. He and another were sitting within the booth. They rose to receive us. Having exchanged salutations, all seated themselves about the dishes, of which there were two. These were placed upon a magnificent silk Persian carpet spread on the sand. I had not seen so fine a carpet in any house of Mekka or El Medîna. Expensive arms and carpets are the

only articles of great value which are found in the tent of a Bedouin, and these are rare. These valuable carpets are used only on feast days or in the entertainment of distinguished guests. At other times they are not seen, being stowed in hair-cloth sacks, and thus used as cushions.

Now, in response to the old shaykh's repeated invitations, I ate, with great energy and gusto during some quarter of an hour, about a spoonful of rice and an ounce of meat. As fast as my host placed pieces of meat in front of me, I passed other pieces from my pile to my neighbour. At last Abdul Khâlig gave praise to Allah and rose to wash his hands. I delayed no longer to do likewise.

This was not the last of the Bedouins' hospitality, for when we had returned to Ibrâhîm's tent and laid us down to sleep in its shade, there came yet another messenger to invite us to a third feast. My two companions, however, and also Ibrâhîm and his cronies, excused themselves with the plea that they had eaten their fill. Thereafter, we lay and slept in peace among the lambs and kids within the shadow of the tent.

Soon after el'aṣr the sleepers began to stir, and the merchants urged Ibrâhîm to prepare his camels for the march to Yanbua. The holiday-making Bedouin showed little inclination to move for some time, but finally he sat up and began to make coffee. After we had drunk this, he rose and went forth into the desert, accompanied by Suwaylim, to find his camels. The animals had been turned loose to graze, and were no longer in sight.

It was after sunset when they returned with the beasts, and then a hot dispute arose between them, for Suwaylim wished not to go to Yanbua. He would

remain in the camp until the morrow, he said, for was not this a day of feasting? After much noisy argument, however, we started at the hour of el 'esha.

Our way lay westwards across the sandy plain. Coming to a well, the Bedouins halted in order to water their animals. I saw numbers of camels wandering about the water-hole in the starlight. Doubtless their owners were encamped near-by.

After leaving this well we marched forward over the plain—which here exhibited a more stony surface—until dawn. As it became lighter, we saw the sea to westward, for our road lay parallel to the shore. Some miles ahead of us, to the north-west, a small collection of houses, clustered together on a low eminence, could be seen. Above their roofs rose two minarets. This was the seaport of Yanbua. To eastward, Jebel Rodhwa rose high into the blue sky.

As the sun slowly mounted, the heat on the salt-encrusted plain increased minute by minute. All about us the naked desert reflected a white glare, so that we moved as it were between two fires. Our refuge, Yanbua, looked as bleached and arid as the surrounding wilderness, while we slowly drew near to it.

At last we crawled through the gateway in the town wall, when our surroundings changed completely. The day was the last day of the Feast of Sacrifices,* and the people of Yanbua were making holiday. They wore their best clothes, and lounged in the coffee-houses, talking and smoking. The Wahhâbî governor of the town was far from being a strict puritan. Later I observed that it was the custom here for many

* The Feast of Sacrifices is on the 10th Du-l Hijja; but throughout the Islamic world, wherever it is possible, the Muslims make holiday on the two following days also (i.e. during the Days of Flesh-drying).

of the prominent officials to smoke the shîsha while discharging the affairs of their offices. Several of them employed servants to carry their shîshas wherever they went. At a sign from the master the servant would at once place the shîsha on the ground before him, whether he sat in a coffee-hoûse or in his office, and present the mouthpiece to him.

The day being a holiday, nobody cared to give a thought to business, and I experienced some difficulty in finding a place in which to lodge. At last Ibrâhîm discovered an old wakâla (inn) overlooking the harbour. The innkeeper was not at home, so I chose a room on the upper floor and placed my baggage in it. The two merchants had gone to friends in a different part of the town. I now gave Ibrâhîm a present of money and he left me.

Presently the innkeeper, Mahmûd by name, came in. He seemed anxious to make me comfortable, and he prepared some food for me. During the afternoon I slept, while a cool breeze from off the sea blew in through the open casement. At sunset I went with Mahmûd to the mosque, and in the evening I went to find one Ibrâhîm Adham, a Syrian doctor in the Government service, whom I had known in Mekka. This man was now stationed in Yanbua. He knew of my true identity, and he was pleased to see me. He was fond of telling me all about the measures which should be instituted for the sanitation of the Hijâz. Through his mediation I obtained one of the temporary passports which are issued to hâjjis who have lost their papers while in the Hijâz.

After the hour of el 'esha Mahmûd and I sat on kursîs under the arches at one side of the courtyard of the inn. My host had belonged to a military corps of

camelry recruited by the Turks for the defence of the Hijâz. He described to me how his troop fled from El Wejh when that port was attacked by Faysal's Arabs. With eight companions mounted on deluls he had reached Medâin Sâlih on the Hijâz Railway. Travelling down the railway line towards El Medînâ, they had met a caravan of the Anayza at El 'Elâ. With this they travelled to Hâil where they remained as the guests of Ibn Rashîd until the Turks were expelled from El Medîna. Mahmûd then returned to the Prophet's city, and afterwards came to Yanbua to take charge of the wakâla which his father, dying, had left him. The inn had been built a hundred and fifty years before.

Lying on pieces of sacking under the arches, there were two emaciated brown figures. One of them was a destitute Indian hâjji. After visiting the Prophet's tomb he had intended to return to Mekka in time to perform the Hajj. His strength had failed, however, and he had reached Yanbua on his feet in a state of collapse. Now he ate bread and dates at Mahmûd's expense. He would look up at the grave face of the innkeeper with eyes that shone so eloquently with trust and gratitude that it was quite startling to look at him. We debated what should be done with this poor beggar. His name was Ali. One suggestion was to find a captain of a dhow who would take him down to Jidda without payment, so that he might appeal to the British consul for help to return to Bombay. Ali, being called upon to accept or reject this proposal, could not understand what was said to him, for he knew no Arabic. In the course of the discussion it came out that he thought himself to be in Jidda, and he wept in his bewilderment when Mahmûd's assistant, by patting the ground with his hand and repeating the word 'Yanbua' many

times, at last made him understand where he was. By a lavish display of gesture he was finally informed that it was proposed to send him back to Bombay. No sooner did he comprehend this than he began to blubber copiously, and going down on his knees in front of the innkeeper, he took his hand and repeatedly kissed it and laid his head on it, saying in Arabic: "My father, my father." This word he had doubtless learnt from the camel-men in the way from Mekka, who use it frequently in addressing the hâjjis. Mahmûd, having reassured him with smiles and gestures, giving him to understand that he might remain where he was, the Indian crept away into the shadows and was no more heard.

The other beggar was scarcely more than a brown skeleton. His eyes were deeply sunk in his skull, and every bone in his body showed distinctly under the skin. He was a native of the Yemen, and had travelled to Mekka on foot and performed the Hajj in the previous year. Since then he had been to Et-Tâif and El Medîna, begging for his bread on the way. He was a mere youth, and although he was obviously slowly dying of dysentery, I was struck by the expression of calm determination on his face as he announced in a weak voice his intention to visit Jerusalem, Hebron, and Damascus. The body of that poor fanatic was too weak to stand upright, but the impression I received when talking to him was of strength—the strength of a dauntless spirit, too fine for the poor base clay to keep pace with. He received my alms, giving thanks to Allah in his weak voice.

I slept luxuriously on a kursî on the roof. Mahmûd and a friend of his occupied two other kursîs.

On the following day the *Mansura*, a little coast-

ing steamer of the Egyptian *Khedivial Mail Line*, entered the harbour, and I boarded her. I would travel on her to Port Sudan, and thence by Khartum to Cairo.

Having spoken to the captain, I retired to a cabin which was allotted to me. Here I shaved my chin, and put on a suit of drill and other articles of European dress. Some of these I had purchased in the market-place of Yanbua, and others from the steward of the steamer.

For the first time for more than a year I now ate with a knife and fork. I was still seated at table with my fellow-passengers when the anchor was heaved up and the propellor began to revolve. Presently I left the saloon and leant on the rail to obtain a last view of Arabia. Beyond the blue waters lay the silent yellow plain, and far away to the eastward the high peak of Rodhwa was fading slowly. The steamer had swung round the sandy islet which protects the harbour, and was heading for the open sea.

THE END

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